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N A T U R A L and R E V E A L E D

R E L I G I O N.

V O L. III.

C O N T A I N I N G

A View of the Doctrines of Revelation.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D.F.R.S.

*From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which
are able to make thee wise unto salvation.*

PAUL to TIMOTHY.

L O N D O N,

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Mrs. J. D. W. Williams

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THE PREFACE.

THE execution of this part of my undertaking has been attended (as all who are acquainted with the subject will be fully sensible) with peculiar difficulties, owing chiefly to the very different views, which even rational and learned men have entertained concerning the *Doctrines of Revelation*; and, therefore, it is with peculiar diffidence that I offer this volume to the public.

A strict attention, however, to my original design, which was *the instruction of young persons*, has enabled me to keep clear of a great deal of that embarrassment, in which I should otherwise have been involved; for, though it was not possible to avoid all subjects that have been controverted, I have, by this means, avoided many of

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them;

them; and there are few of those which I could not avoid that I have discussed at large, having contented myself, for the most part, with relating what appeared to me to be the genuine Doctrines of Revelation, without intimating that there has ever been any controversy upon the subject.

It was also with a view to the instruction of youth, that I have been so particular in my account of what we learn from the scriptures concerning *God*, and all the branches of human *duty*, and especially that I have quoted so much from the scriptures themselves on those subjects. My intention was to appear as little as possible in this matter myself, and to let the sacred writers, to whose more intimate acquaintance I wish to introduce my pupil, speak for themselves. There is, besides, an authority and energy in the language of the scriptures, which is peculiar to themselves, and which cannot fail, when they are read and considered with due attention, to make the most favourable and the strongest impressions.

I have, upon more occasions than one, complained that the scriptures are too much neglected

neglected even by christians, though we cannot be too well acquainted with them, and there are no books that we can read with so much advantage. I shall be happy if I can make this work also subservient to my design of recommending them, and more especially to young persons. This volume, which contains an account of what we learn from the scriptures, was far from being intended to supersede the use of them. It was rather intended to afford some assistance for the better understanding of them, and thereby to introduce my reader to the diligent study of them, and frequent meditation upon them, with more advantage.

I had intended to have prefixed to this volume a particular examination of what has been advanced concerning the doctrines and evidences of religion by Dr. Beattie, and especially Dr. Oswald, who represent *common sense* as superseding almost all *reasoning* about religion, natural or revealed, and who have advanced maxims which I cannot help thinking to be both ill founded and dangerous. But finding, after I had made some progress in this work, that it drew to a considerable length, I

thought it would be better to reserve the remarks that I had made on those writers to some other opportunity, when I may also possibly enter into a more particular examination of what Dr. Reid has advanced concerning this pretended new principle of *common sense*; and, in the mean time, to content myself with a few general remarks on the subject, and an extract or two from Dr. Oswald, that my reader may form some idea of the nature and spirit of the principles that I mean to oppose.

I am truly sorry to complain of the conduct of any of the sincere friends of revelation, as I believe Dr. Beattie and Dr. Oswald to be; but it appears to me, that their writings must necessarily give a great, and a very plausible advantage to unbelievers; who, finding that it is not now pretended that religion in general, or christianity in particular, is founded on *argument*, will make no difficulty of rejecting them on the principles of common sense also, and will not be displeased to find that christian writers will argue the matter with them no longer.

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This common sense, which is from henceforth to be considered as the first, and likewise the last resort with respect to religion, and the evidences of it, these writers represent as being the same power or faculty by which we judge that the whole is greater than a part, and by which we distinguish all other self-evident truths from palpable absurdities. By the very concise process of an appeal to this principle, they say, that any man may fully satisfy himself concerning the truth of the being, the unity, the attributes, and the providence of God, and also of a future state of retribution, and even (as Dr. Oswald has given out, and has promised to prove at large) of the evidences of christianity.

Upon this plan I might have saved myself the trouble of writing the preceding volumes of this work, in which my object has been to prove the truth of the above mentioned propositions, contenting myself with roundly asserting them; and, without replying to any of the objections of unbelievers, not hesitating to pronounce every man a fool (see Dr. Oswald's Appeal, p. 134.) who did not assent to them.

But, notwithstanding, I have given all the attention I could to the treatise of Dr. Oswald, who has written most fully on the subject, I am by no means convinced that the propositions above mentioned are to be classed among *primary truths*, or those to which every man must necessarily give his assent (when the terms of them have been properly explained) without the help of other intermediate propositions. And as I have no natural right to set up my private judgment as the standard of truth in opposition to that of the rest of mankind, I do not see but that an unbeliever is as much at liberty to assert the *falsehood*, as I am to assert the *truth* of such propositions; and what would be gained by our reciprocally calling one another fools and blockheads?

The source of this umbrage that has been taken at *reasoning* about religion, appears to me to have been a mistake concerning the nature of it, and an expectation of a *kind*, or *degree* of evidence, that the nature of the case will not admit of; and which, indeed, is by no means necessary for the purpose to which it is applied; being different from, or superior to, that evidence which, in other similar cases, doe
actually

actually produce conviction, and influence the conduct; which, however, is evidently all that can be necessary in the business of religion.

If a lottery be proposed to me, in which I see that there are a thousand prizes to one blank, I do not demur about purchasing a ticket, because it cannot be *absolutely demonstrated* that I shall be a gainer by it; a very high degree of probability having an effect upon the mind, that can hardly be distinguished from that of absolute certainty.

If the Copernican hypothesis of the solar system be proposed to me, I do not reject it, or even keep my mind in suspense, because there is a *possibility* of the Ptolemaic system being true, and because the sun, immense as it is, and rapid as its motion must be, *may* revolve round the earth.

This is still more evidently the case with respect to the influence of *testimony* upon the mind of man, though it can never amount to more than a very high degree of probability. For we reason and act upon the supposition of there having been

such a man as Julius Cæsar, of his having been stabbed in the senate-house, and of there being such a city as Pekin in China, just as if we ourselves had been present at those scenes, or places; though there is a *possibility* of all the books we have read having been contrived to impose upon us and the world, and that all our acquaintance, who were in the secret, concurred to favour the deception.

Now all the evidence of religious truths is of these kinds, being either general conclusions, by induction from a number of particular appearances, or founded on historical evidence.

If any person, like Lord Bolingbroke, call in question the goodness of God, all that I can say to convince him of his mistake, is to shew him that there are more marks of kind intention than of the contrary in the structure and government of the world; and, if he reply, that some facts, singly taken, are as evident marks of a malevolent intention, as others are of a good intention, and the particular instances to which he alludes be such as I cannot deny or explain, so that my proof

is

is not complete, I frankly acknowledge that I have no other, or better. But this is sufficient to satisfy me, and I presume it will be abundantly satisfactory to all who are candid and impartial; and with persons who are otherwise disposed, an appeal to their common sense will have no more effect.

In like manner, to prove the facts of the death and resurrection of Christ, the early dates, and consequent authenticity of the gospel histories, or any other facts, from which the truth of what we call the *gospel* is inferred, it is sufficient, but it is necessary, to shew that the credibility of these facts has the same foundation as that of those which constitute the body of all ancient history, and that the miraculous events have such additional evidence of an external and internal kind, as overbalances our backwardness to admit the truth of facts dissimilar to those in other histories, and those which have fallen within our own particular observation. And if any person will say that this is not *demonstration*, I am silent; satisfied with having alledged such evidence as the nature of the

case admitted, and despairing of producing conviction by any other means.

The thing that seems chiefly to have influenced the writers above mentioned to desert the plain doctrine of Mr. Locke, concerning the source of our ideas, is its insufficiency to demonstrate the reality of a *material world*; and I readily acknowledge it is insufficient for such a demonstration as shall leave no room for cavil: because it may be said that it is *possible* that the divine being may, by his own immediate agency, present every separate train of ideas to every individual mind, without the medium of an external world. And if this appears to any person a more natural, and simple hypothesis to account for our ideas, and therefore preferable to the supposition of a real external world; by means of which, and of a more general agency of the Deity, the same ideas may be presented to thousands and millions of minds, I leave him to his imagination, from which no evil, that I know, will result.

Half the inhabitants of the globe, for instance, may be looking towards the heavens
at

at the same time, and all their minds are impressed in the same manner: all see the moon, stars, and planets, in precisely the same situations; and even the observations of those who use telescopes correspond with the utmost exactness. To explain this, bishop Berkley says, that the divine Being, attending particularly to each individual mind, impresses their sensoriums in the same, or a corresponding manner, without the medium of any thing external to them. On the other hand, I, without pretending that his scheme is impossible, where divine power is concerned, think, however, that it is more natural to suppose, that there really are such bodies as the moon, stars and planets, placed at certain distances from us, and moving in certain directions; by means of which, without such an agency of the Deity as he supposes, all our minds are necessarily impressed in this corresponding manner.

I am satisfied that if such a representation as this (by which I exhibit to any person particular appearances as arising from more *general laws*, which is agreeable to the analogy of every thing else that we observe) does not please and convince him, it will signify nothing to tell him, with Messrs. Reid, Beattie,

Beattie, and Oswald, that the case is not to be argued at all, that he has something within himself, called *common sense*, which tells him that there *is* an external world, and that, if he reflect a moment, he must *know* that all his objections are frivolous and absurd.

The hypothesis of there being no external world is by no means so shocking to my understanding, or, to use the favourite phrase, my common sense, as the supposition that I am properly *conscious* of more than passes within my own mind, or, as Dr. Reid expresses it, that we *really perceive things that are external to us*, and do not judge of all things that are without ourselves by notices perceived within, how mistaken soever we may be in our judgments concerning them.

It is not very easy to understand what it is, philosophically speaking, that Dr. Reid, Dr. Beattie, and Dr. Oswald, always mean by their common sense; but how captivating soever their general descriptions of it may be at the first hearing, they appear to me to be exceedingly vague and inconsistent, upon a more attentive examination.

Sometimes one would imagine, that the human mind was so effectually guarded with
this

this internal defence, that no one of the human race could be in danger of falling into any error of consequence, and that even all revelation might have been spared. “The human mind,” says Dr. Oswald, vol. i. p. 8, “has a power of pronouncing, at first sight on obvious truth, with a quickness, clearness, and indubitable certainty, similar, if not equal to the information conveyed by the external organs of sense. Its exercise begins in children with the first dawn of rationality, and not till then, and is ever after enjoyed, in some degree, by learned and unlearned, and by every individual of the human kind, who is not an idiot, or some how disordered in his intellects, affording an almost infallible direction in the whole conduct of their lives; and was intended by the author of our being for giving us intire satisfaction concerning all primary truths, those of religion in particular; and our not having recourse to that power, is the true cause of those idle disputes which have been maintained of late about the truth of religion. The feeling of moral excellence,” he says, p. 120, “may be lost, but, the case of madness excepted, a man cannot lose a
“ per-

“ perception of the difference between ob-
“ vious truth and palpable absurdity.”

At other times we are informed that it is a most difficult thing to attain to a right judgment on the principles of this same common sense. “ Good sense,” Dr. Oswald says, vol. I. p. 16, “ is a species of
“ knowledge, of difficult attainment. It is
“ indeed the gift of heaven, but needs to be
“ stirred up, and has been so long, and
“ universally neglected, that to give it full
“ exercise requires more attention and ap-
“ plication of thought, than most people
“ are willing to bestow. Every smatterer
“ in science takes it for granted that he is
“ possessed of the principles of good sense,
“ but on trial the greatest adepts will hardly
“ admit them. They are, in truth, so plain,
“ that to illustrate and inculcate them is to
“ tire the patience, and to affront the judg-
“ ment of the reader; but, at the same time,
“ so diametrically opposite to received opini-
“ ons, and established maxims, that barely
“ to propose, or even to state them with
“ perspicuity, without unfolding or incul-
“ cating them with due care, would be to
“ encourage that superficial way of judging,
“ which is the source of all our errors.”

He

He farther says, p. 18, that in order “to convey that full and permanent conviction which is due to truths of the first rank, the mind must be allowed to judge of them with impartiality and coolness, proceeding not upon sentiments suddenly raised by striking views of truth, but on a deliberate judgment, formed by a familiar acquaintance with the object : and in order thereto, the same truths must be presented again and again, with no great variation, and with as little adventitious ornament as possible.”

In this deplorable state of the affairs of *common sense*, one would think that Dr. Oswald might be glad to avail himself of the aid of *reason* ; but of this he entertains the greatest dread. Even a professed unbeliever is not so great a bugbear to him as a reasoning christian. I shall present my reader with one of his numerous pathetic complaints on this subject.

“ Not only the christian revelation, but the moral perfections and moral government of God, yea, and the very being of virtue, have been made a subject of dispute. Freethinkers are not ashamed
“ to

“ to publish their doubts concerning these
“ realities; divines and philosophers have
“ not disdained to establish them by a mul-
“ titude of arguments. What is yet more to
“ be regretted, the preachers of the gospel,
“ forgetting the dignity of their character,
“ and the design of their office, have con-
“ descended to plead the cause of religion
“ in much the same manner as lawyers
“ maintain a disputed right of property.
“ Instead of awakening the natural senti-
“ ments of the human heart, and giving
“ them a free direction, they have entered
“ into reasonings about piety, justice, and
“ benevolence, too profound to be fa-
“ thomed by the multitude, and too sub-
“ tile to produce any considerable effect.
“ Instead of setting forth the displays of
“ divine perfection in the dispensation of
“ the gospel, so admirably well fitted to
“ touch, to penetrate, and to subdue the
“ human mind, they have entertained their
“ audiences with long and laboured proofs
“ of a revelation from God, of which few
“ have any serious doubt, and which no
“ man can disbelieve in any consistency with
“ common sense. May not this be called
“ with great propriety a throwing cold
“ water on religion? And ought it not to
“ be

“ be considered as one of the chief causes
“ of that insensibility to all its concerns,
“ of which we so frequently complain?
“ The multitude have been astonished,
“ wise men have been ashamed, and good
“ men grieved at this treatment of religion,
“ so much beneath its dignity.”

I would not be severe upon Dr. Oswald, though he observes no bounds in his censures of the most respectable writers of the last and present age, without distinction; but I cannot help saying, that, in this loose and rhetorical manner, and with such airs of self-sufficiency, and arrogance, is the greatest part of his two volumes written; consisting of mere declamation, the grossest misrepresentations of the nature of reasoning, and exaggerations of the abuses of it; imputing to christian divines a conduct that they are not chargeable with, and where argument fails, having recourse to dogmatical, assertions, and abuse; at the same time that his tautology is inexpressibly tiresome. I really do not remember that I ever read a work so large as this of Dr. Oswald, that contained so little; I do not mean of *truth*, but of *any thing*. That any good should come of this manner of writing
is

is to me incomprehensible. It may, indeed, give pleasure to some to see insolence answered by insolence, and sophistry by sophistry; but alas! truth is no gainer by such a mode of defence as this.

It was not till after the publication of the two preceding volumes of this work, that I had an opportunity of reading Dr. Oswald's treatise; for though I had promised the author of the *Remarks on my publications*, to procure it immediately, upon his recommendation, a variety of pursuits prevented my giving any attention to it. I am sorry that my opinion of this performance should differ so much from that of this ingenious writer, and indeed from that of many other persons whom I much respect.

As to *Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, I frankly declare that, excepting a few incidental things, foreign to his general object, I do not find in it a single observation that is *new*, and at the same time *just*. The only effect of all the pains that both this ingenious writer, Dr. Beattie, and Dr. Oswald have taken with the subject, appears to me to have terminated in nothing, besides becloud-

clouding and puzzling a business, which, in the main, Mr. Locke left very clear, and far advanced.

But I am most astonished that any person should write upon the subject of the *human mind*, without taking notice of so capital a performance as that of Dr. Hartley; who, beginning where Mr. Locke left it, has raised a system that is equally amazing for its simplicity and extent. For my own part, I do not hesitate to rank *Hartley's Observations on Man* among the greatest efforts of human genius; and, considering the great importance of the object of it, I am clearly of opinion that it is, without exception, the most valuable production of the mind of man.

Time is necessary to the general understanding of every work of great depth and merit, as was most remarkably the case of *Newton's Principia*. I have no doubt, however, but that the time will certainly come, when the general principles of Hartley, as well as of Locke, will be fully established, and when every contrary hypothesis will be forgotten. If they be remembered at all, it will be with astonishment, that, appearing after such a work as Hartley's (which was
published

published so long ago as 1749) the least attention should have been given to them.

I cannot conclude this Preface without recommending to my readers the present bishop of Carlisle's *Appendix to his Considerations on the Theory of Religion*, for a fuller account of the scripture doctrine of the *state of the dead*, than is given in Part III. Sect. IV. of this volume. It was also through mere inadvertence, that I did not mention this excellent treatise in the list of books recommended in the preface to the second volume of this work.

THE CONTENTS

OF VOL. III.

PART I.

WHAT we learn from the scriptures concerning God,	—	page 3
Sec. I. <i>Of the unity, the natural perfections, and providence of God.</i>		ibid.
Sec. II. <i>Of the moral attributes of God.</i>		48
Sec. III. <i>Of the goodness of God.</i>	—	58
Sec. IV. <i>Of the mercy of God.</i>	—	62
Sec. V. <i>Of the divine veracity.</i>	—	74
Part II. <i>Of the duty which God requires of man.</i>		77
Sec. I. <i>Of the duty of man with respect to God.</i>		78
Sec. II. <i>Of the social duties.</i>	—	92
Sec. III. <i>Of the duties which respect ourselves.</i>		102
Sec. IV. <i>Of the means of virtue.</i>	—	114
Sec. V. <i>General remarks concerning morality.</i>		120
Sec. VI. <i>Of positive institutions.</i>	—	132
§ 1. <i>Of the observance of the sabbath.</i>		133
§ 2. <i>Of sacrifices.</i>	—	139
§ 3. <i>Of the Jewish ritual.</i>	—	145
§ 4. <i>Of baptism.</i>	—	154
§ 5. <i>Of the Lord's supper.</i>	—	160
		Sec.

Sec. VII. <i>Of the government of christian churches.</i>	165
Part III. <i>Of the future expectations of mankind</i> <i>derived from revelation.</i> —	169
Sec. I. <i>Of a future state in general.</i> —	ibid.
Sec. II. <i>Of the nature of future rewards and punishments.</i> — —	182
Sec. III. <i>Of the duration of future punishment.</i>	190
Sec. IV. <i>Of the time and place of future rewards and punishments.</i> — —	196
Sec. V. <i>Of the future condition of the world in general.</i> — —	215
Appendix.	231
Sec. I. <i>Of other intelligent beings besides man.</i>	ibid.
Sec. II. <i>Of abstinence from blood.</i> —	239

THE DOCTRINES OF REVEALED RELIGION.

AS the Jewish and christian religions have been proved to be founded on a series of revelations of the will of God to man, the history of which is recorded in the Old and New Testament, it behoves us to examine these books with care; taking it for granted that they contain truths of the greatest importance to our happiness.

In this part of my work, therefore, I propose to exhibit, with as much fidelity and distinctness as I can, all the *general knowledge* that can, with certainty, be collected from these books, which are usually, and very deservedly, termed *sacred*. I shall be careful, however, to keep as far as possible from all controversy, and simply recite what appears to me to be contained in the scriptures, just as I think I should have

VOL. III. B done

done if I had never heard of any controversy upon the subject. Every thing that has been the subject of much contention and debate, I shall reserve for the fourth, and last volume of this work, which will be appropriated to a view of the corruptions of christianity.

As I divided the subject of natural religion into three parts, the first containing what we were able to learn from thence concerning *God*, the second concerning *our duty*, and the third concerning our *future expectations*, I shall adhere to the same general division in this part of my work also; by which means it will be more easily and distinctly seen what *additional*, what *fuller*, and *clearer* knowledge, we receive on these important subjects from divine revelation.

P A R T I.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE SCRIPTURES
CONCERNING GOD.

This first part I shall subdivide into two others, the first respecting the *unity*, as also the *natural perfections*, and *providence* of God, and the second his *moral perfections*.

S E C T I O N I.

Of the *unity*, the *natural perfections*, and *providence of God*.

ONE of the most important of all the truths concerning God, as that invisible being, who is the object of our supreme reverence, and to whom we address ourselves in prayer, as our immediate inspector, and moral governor, is his *unity*. That there is but one God, we have seen to be a truth deducible from the observation

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of the works of nature ; but it is not so easily and clearly deducible from thence, but that mankind have always been prone to fall into *idolatry*, or the worship of more gods than one; which seems to have arisen chiefly from the very low and imperfect ideas that men entertained of the knowledge and power of God.

Judging of all other intelligent beings by themselves, they had no conception of one superintending mind only being sufficient for all the purposes for which the presence and agency of the Deity was supposed to be requisite, and therefore imagined that there must, of necessity, be a multiplicity of beings of that character, each superintending his respective province in nature. If they retained the idea of one *supreme* God, which seems to have been the belief of all mankind in the earliest ages (handed down, I believe, by tradition from Noah and his immediate descendants) they still did not think that this one supreme Being could govern the world without the assistance of other *subordinate* beings, of an intermediate nature between himself and man. These subordinate agents they would therefore consider as the beings with whom they had immediately to do, and whom their religious

ous worship and homage would respect ; while the worship of the supreme Being would be in danger of being neglected.

This was the actual progress of things in the heathen world. Mankind began with the worship of one true God ; but, having afterwards associated with him various inferior beings, as objects of divine worship, they, in time, lost sight of the supreme Being altogether ; so that not one of the objects of the popular worship among the Greeks or Romans were any thing more than either the sun, moon, and stars, the souls of dead men, or their images, symbols, &c.

With these general ideas, which are the foundation of all idolatry, mankind would naturally, in the first place, pitch upon the most illustrious objects in the creation, as instruments in the hands of the supreme Being of communicating blessings to them, or inflicting judgments upon them ; and these they would consider as the most proper to be placed in the order of gods. Accordingly we find that the sun, moon, and stars, were universally the first objects of idolatrous worship, as those beings from which it was supposed that men had the most to hope or to fear. And being sen-

fible that *intelligence* was necessary to their office of superintending the affairs of men, they either imagined them to be animated by some intelligent minds, or to be the habitations of such beings.

Imagining also that there must be something in man besides what is visible, they conceived that a spirit, capable of being separated from him, animated him also; and, supposing that the powers of this animating spirit might even be enlarged after death, they made the most illustrious of their princes and heroes the objects of divine worship likewise. Afterwards, imagining that various parts both of the animate and inanimate creation bore a peculiar relation to these gods, with respect to their names, forms, or qualities, they first entertained a respect for them as the symbols, or tokens of the presence of their gods; and in time proceeded to conceive of them as being themselves endowed with supernatural powers. In this manner, probably, the ancient Egyptians came to rank a great number of both animals and vegetables, and also their images, &c. among their divinities.

By proceeding in this train, it came to pass, as I have observed already, that at
length

length the one living and true God, the creator and governor of the world was overlooked, and forgotten by mankind. The necessary consequence of this was, that, besides entertaining very false, unworthy, and injurious ideas of God and his perfections, mankind were destitute of that most excellent means of exalting their conceptions, and consequently of improving their natures, which is derived from the contemplation of, and a sense of their constant intercourse with, a being in whom all venerable and amiable attributes unite. It is a sense of our immediate dependence upon, and constant intercourse with a being, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and, at the same time, perfectly holy, just, and good, that can alone inspire that deep reverence, humility, gratitude, submission, and confidence, which gives the greatest dignity to our sentiments, the noblest ardour to our best affections, the most serene and cheerful temper of mind under all events, and which thereby qualify and prompt us to act our parts in life to the most advantage, so as to make the most of our situation in every respect, by being happy ourselves, and contributing to the happiness of others.

Whenever we quit our hold of this great doctrine of the *divine unity*, and imagine that there is no one object of our worship in whom all venerable and all amiable attributes unite, there is nothing we can contemplate that is capable of impressing our minds so *forcibly*, or in so *happy* a manner. Our attention being divided by a multiplicity of objects of worship, and our ideas of their characters being necessarily different, our affections, with respect to them, will also vary, so that we shall be apt to love some of them, and be afraid of others; and since, in consequence of distributing the divine attributes among a number of beings, they will all of them be, necessarily, brought nearer to our own level, both our fear and love will be in danger of becoming little more than such as beings like ourselves are capable of inspiring. It is also impossible but that, while we imagine there is such a multiplicity of superior beings, which consequently must have their peculiar characters, we shall suppose them to have their peculiar tastes and inclinations, and that those of some of them will interfere with those of others.

Lastly, it can hardly be, but that, among such a number of deities, of inferior natures
and

and characters, the creatures of men's imagination, and consequently supposed to be in many respects like themselves, some of them will be supposed to be capable of such *capricious* fancies, as men are influenced by; and consequently that, in order to please them, mankind would be led to a variety of superstitious and unmeaning practices, and even such as are immoral and destructive.

This appears to have been the natural and universal consequence of polytheism; so that though at first sight it may seem to be a matter of speculation only, whether there be more gods than one, it has, in fact, the most serious and alarming consequences in practice. By breaking the unity of God, and distributing his attributes among a number of beings, the character of the divine administration was debased, a multiplicity of rites were devised, in order to please a multiplicity of deities, and some of them were whimsical, some flagitious, and some cruel.

That the doctrine of the divine unity is a doctrine of very great importance, may be inferred with certainty, from the very great stress that is every where laid upon it

in the scriptures. The sacred writers always speak of one Being, of incomprehensible power, wisdom, and goodness; as the only maker, preserver, and sovereign disposer of all things; who has existed from all eternity, and who is absolutely unchangeable in his nature or designs. He is the only invisible Being to whom we are authorized to address ourselves by prayer, while the worship of other beings is forbidden in the strongest manner; and other gods, whether supposed to be equal or subordinate to him, are spoken of with the greatest indignation and contempt. More especially, whereas some of the heathen gods were thought to preside over some particular parts of nature only, and others over other parts, and some of them were supposed to be the authors of good, and others of evil; *universal dominion* is always ascribed to the one true God, and also the appointment of both good and evil, respecting both individuals and nations of mankind.

Indeed, it is not possible to form an idea of the justness, or propriety of those magnificent descriptions of the perfections and government of God, which occur in the books of scripture, without keeping in view the very low ideas which other nations enter-

entertained of their gods; nor can we see the propriety of this subject being so much enlarged upon, and the precepts founded upon it being so frequently repeated, or of the sanctions appointed to guard it being made so awful, without considering that very great propensity to idolatry which has ever been discovered by mankind, and the dreadful consequences of it with respect to the depravity which it has never failed to introduce into the sentiments and hearts of men, and the abominable and horrid customs which it has occasioned respecting society. Idolatry has never failed to insinuate itself, under some form or other, into every dispensation of religion, insomuch that even christianity has by no means escaped this dreadful corruption.

Having undertaken to exhibit what it is that we learn from revelation, I shall also endeavour to give some idea of the relative importance of every article of faith, by noting the degree of stress which the sacred writers lay upon each of them; and I do not think that I can do my duty, and fulfil my engagements in this respect, without reciting a considerable number of passages from the books both of the Old and New Testament on this subject, and more espe-

cially from the former, which relates to the times in which idolatry was peculiarly prevalent. To preserve in the world the knowledge and worship of the one true God, seems, indeed, to have been the principal object of the whole Jewish dispensation; and therefore we are not surprised that our attention is constantly kept up to it through the whole of the Old Testament history. Besides, we are apt to lose our idea, not only of the *relative*, but also of the *real* importance of this doctrine, without recurring to, and reflecting upon, what we read in the Old Testament concerning it.

The first of the Ten Commandments, pronounced by an audible and supernatural voice from mount Sinai, in the hearing of all the Israelites, relates to this subject only, Ex. xx. 3. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The same doctrine of the unity of God, and the sentiments which result from it, are also frequently inculcated in all the writings of Moses; as Deut. vi. 4. "Here, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

This

This passage of Moses is also quoted by our Lord, as containing the first and the most important of all the commandments in the Law, Mark xii. 28—30, “ And
“ one of the scribes came and asked him,
“ Which is the first commandment of all?
“ And Jesus answered him, The first of all
“ the commandments is, Hear, O Israel,
“ the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou
“ shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy
“ heart, and with all thy soul, and with
“ all thy mind, and with all thy strength.
“ This is the first commandment.”

The divine Being himself, in a very emphatical manner, asserts his sole title to divinity in Is. xliv. 6. “ Thus saith the
“ Lord, the king of Israel, and his redeemer, the Lord of hosts. I am the first,
“ and I am the last, and besides me there
“ is no God, Fear ye not, neither be
“ afraid; have not I told you from that
“ time, and have declared it. Ye are even
“ my witnesses. Is there a God besides
“ me? Yea, there is no God, I know not
“ any.

The same doctrine is not only always supposed, but it is likewise frequently and very expressly inculcated in the New Testament; as in 1 Tim. ii. 5. “ There is one
“ God,

“ God, and one mediator between God
 “ and men, the man Christ Jesus ;” and 1
 Cor. viii. 4. &c. “ We know that an
 “ idol is nothing in the world, and that
 “ there is none other God but one. For
 “ though there be that are called gods,
 “ whether in heaven or in earth, as there
 “ be gods many, and lords many, but to
 “ us there is but one God, the Father, of
 “ whom are all things, and we in him ; and
 “ one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all
 “ things, and we by him.” The Apostle
 James also mentions this doctrine in such a
 manner as plainly shews that he considered
 it as the most incontestable maxim in reli-
 gion. Jam. ii. 19. “ Thou believest that
 “ there is one God, thou dost well.”

The worship of the true God by images,
 or symbols, &c. is also most expressly for-
 bidden in the Old Testament. This spe-
 cies of idolatry was commonly practised at
 the time of the promulgation of the Law,
 and the second of the Ten Commandments
 is appropriated to the prohibition of it. Ex.
 xx. 4, &c. “ Thou shalt not make unto
 “ thee any graven image, or any likeness
 “ of any thing that is in heaven above, or
 “ that is in the earth beneath, or that is in
 “ the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not
 “ bow

“ bow down thy self to them, nor serve
“ them; for I the Lord thy God am a
“ jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the
“ fathers upon the children, unto the third
“ and fourth generation of them that hate
“ me, and shewing mercy unto thousands
“ of them that love me, and keep my
“ commandments.”

To inforce this command Moses is particularly careful to remind the Israelites, that when God spake to them from mount Sinai, they saw no resemblance whatever, but only heard a voice, Deut. iv. 12, &c.
“ And when the Lord spake unto you out of
“ the midst of the fire, ye heard the voice of
“ the words, but saw no similitude, only ye
“ heard a voice. Take ye, therefore, good
“ heed to yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord
“ spake unto you in Horeb, out of the
“ midst of the fire, lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image,
“ the similitude of any figure, the likeness
“ of male or female; the likeness of any
“ beast that is on the earth, the likeness of
“ any winged fowl that flieth in the air,
“ the likeness of any thing that creepeth on
“ the ground, the likeness of any fish that
“ is in the water beneath the earth. And
“ lest

“left thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven,
 “and when thou seest the sun, and the
 “moon, and the stars, even all the host of
 “heaven, shouldest be driven to worship
 “them, and serve them, which the Lord
 “thy God hath divided unto all nations
 “under the whole heaven. But the Lord
 “hath taken you, and brought you forth
 “out of the iron furnace, even out of
 “Egypt, to be unto him a people of inhe-
 “ritance, as ye are this day.”

The reason of this prohibition seems to be, that, in consequence of making use of images, though only as symbols, or tokens of the divine presence, divine powers will at length, by the natural association of ideas, be transferred to them, and will be supposed to reside in them, and to belong to them. This, indeed, has always been in fact the progress of human sentiments. Otherwise different images of the same god in the heathen world, or of the same saint in popish countries, could never have been imagined to be possessed of different powers, which is well known to be the case; so that whatever may have been the *origin* of this mode of worship, and in whatever light it may be viewed by the more intelligent of those who practise and apologize for

for it, with the common people, at least, it is, in reality, nothing but the worship of wood, and stone, and metal; and in this light it is justly considered by the sacred writers. With a view to exclude this kind of worship, God is likewise said to be *invisible*, Heb. xi. 27, and to “dwell in light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” 1 Tim. vi. 16.

The *works of creation* are in a peculiar manner ascribed to the one true God, and especially the creation of the heavenly bodies, which were the first objects of idolatrous worship in the Gentile world. The first book of Moses begins with reciting all the visible parts of the universe, as the work and appointment of God, Gen. i. 1. “In the beginning God created the heavens, and the earth.” Ver. 16. “And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.” The ease with which all these magnificent works were produced is most happily expressed by representing them as the immediate effect of a simple command, Gen. i. 3. “And God said, let there be light, and there was light.” In the same manner also
the

the Psalmist expresses it, Ps. xxxii. 6, &c. “By the word of the Lord were the
 “heavens made, and all the host of them
 “by the breath of his mouth. He spake,
 “and it was done; he commanded, and it
 “stood fast.”

The vain pretences of the heathen gods are exposed on this very account, viz. their not having made the world. Jer. x. 10, &c. “The Lord he is the true God, and
 “an everlasting king. The gods that
 “have not made the heavens and the earth,
 “they shall perish from the earth, and from
 “under these heavens. He has made the
 “earth by his power, he has established
 “the world by his wisdom, and has
 “stretched out the heavens by his dis-
 “cretion.”

When the people of Lystra would have paid divine honours to Barnabas and Paul, supposing the former of them to have been Jupiter, and the latter Mercury; Paul, with peculiar propriety, says to them, Acts xiv. 15, “Sirs, why do ye these things?
 “We also are men of like passions with you,
 “and preach unto you that ye should turn
 “from these vanities, unto the living God,
 “who made the heavens and the earth, and
 “the seas, and all things that are therein.”

For

For neither the people of Lystra, nor any of the idolatrous Greeks or Romans, had the least idea of even Jupiter, the chief of their Gods, having been at all concerned in the creation of the heavens or the earth. To the same purpose, also, the apostle Paul addresses himself to the people of Athens, Acts xvii. 24, &c. “God that made the
“ world, and all things therein, seeing that
“ he is lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth
“ not in temples made with hands, nei-
“ ther is worshipped with mens hands,
“ as though he needed any thing; seeing
“ he giveth to all life, and breath, and all
“ things; and hath made of one blood all
“ nations of men, to dwell on all the face
“ of the earth; and hath determined the
“ times before appointed, and the bounds
“ of their habitation.” All this excellent doctrine would be quite new to his Athenian audience, who had never been used to ascribe such extraordinary powers to any of the Gods which were the objects of their worship.

The absolute *property* which the only true God has in the works of which he is the author, is often finely expressed in the books of scripture. Abraham, addressing himself to the supreme Being, calls him
“ the

“ the most high God, the possessor of hea-
 “ ven and earth,” Gen. xiv. 22. David,
 in his last speech, delivered in the presence
 of all the congregation of Israel, addressing
 himself to God, says, 1 Chron. xxix. 10,
 &c. “ Blessed be thou, Lord God of Is-
 “ rael, our Father, for ever and ever.
 “ Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and
 “ the power, and the glory, and the victory,
 “ and the majesty ; for all that is in heaven
 “ and earth is thine. Thine is the king-
 “ dom, O Lord, and thou art exalted, as
 “ head over all.” Ps. xxi. 1, &c. “ The
 “ earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof,
 “ the world, and all that dwell therein ;
 “ for he has founded it upon the seas, and
 “ established it upon the floods.” Ps.
 xcv. 5. “ The Lord is a great God,
 “ and a great king, above all gods. In
 “ his hands are the deep places of the
 “ earth, the strength of the hills is his also.
 “ The sea is his, and he made it ; and his
 “ hands formed the dry land. O come,
 “ let us worship, and bow down, let us
 “ kneel before the Lord our maker ; for
 “ he is our God, and we are the people of
 “ his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”
 Moses also was careful to impress the Is-
 raelites with this important truth, as well
 as

as with the belief of the unity, and creating power of God, Deut. x. 12. "Behold
 " the heaven, and the heaven of heavens,
 " is the Lord thy God's, the earth also,
 " with all that therein is."

The absolute sovereignty of God is also strongly expressed by St. Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 21, "Let no man glory in men, for all are
 " yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is
 " God's." Also, 1 Cor. xv. 24, "Then
 " cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even
 " the Father, when he shall have put down
 " all rule, and all authority, and power; for
 " he must reign till he hath put all enemies
 " under his feet. But when he says all
 " things are put under him, it is manifest
 " that he is excepted who did put all things
 " under him; and when all things shall be
 " subdued unto him, then shall the Son
 " also himself be subject unto him that put
 " all things under him, that God may be
 " all in all."

The one true God is also represented, in the scriptures, as the sole *preserver*, and constant *upholder* of all things. Upon the occasion of the solemn fast, and prayer, which was observed by the Jews upon their return from the Babylonish captivity, they
 say,

say, Neh. ix. &c. “Blessed be thy glorious
 “name, which is exalted above all blessing
 “and praise. Thou, even thou art Lord alone,
 “thou hast made heaven, the heaven of hea-
 “vens, with all their hosts, the earth, and
 “all things that are therein, the sea and
 “all that is therein, and thou preservest
 “them all, and the host of heaven worship
 “thee.” David expresses the same senti-
 ment more fully, Ps. cxix. 91. “Thou
 “establishedst the earth, and it abideth.
 “They continue to this day, according to
 “thine ordinances, for all are thy ser-
 “vants.”

The divine sovereignty with respect to
 the *absolute disposal* of all things, is a ne-
 cessary consequence of his sole property in
 them; and this also is frequently and
 strongly expressed in the scriptures, Ps.
 ciii. 19. “The Lord hath prepared his
 “throne in the heavens, and his kingdom
 “ruleth over all.” Perhaps the fullest,
 and the most explicit acknowledgement of
 this kind is that which was made by Nebu-
 chadnezzar, after his humiliation, Dan.
 iv. 3—34. “Nebuchadnezzar the king,
 “unto all people, nations, and languages,
 “that dwell in all the earth, peace be
 “multiplied unto you. I thought it good
 “to

“ to shew the signs, and wonders, which
“ the high God hath wrought towards me.
“ How great are his signs, and how mighty
“ are his wonders ! His kingdom is an e-
“ verlasting kingdom, and his dominion is
“ from generation to generation ; and all
“ the inhabitants of the earth are reputed
“ as nothing, and he does according to his
“ will, in the armies of heaven, and among
“ the inhabitants of the earth ; and none
“ can stay his hand, nor say unto him what
“ doest thou. Also I Nebuchadnezzar
“ praise, and extol, and honour the king
“ of heaven, all whose works are truth,
“ and his ways judgment ; and those that
“ walk in pride he is able to abase.”

The divine Being himself makes the following solemn declaration, Is. xlv. 9.
“ Remember the former things, for I am
“ God, and there is none else ; I am God,
“ and there is none like me, declaring the
“ end from the beginning, and from an-
“ cient times, things that are not yet done ;
“ saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will
“ do all my pleasure. I have spoken it,
“ and will also bring it to pass ; I have pur-
“ posed, I will also do it.” Daniel, in his
thanksgiving to God on account of the re-
velation that was made to him of Nebu-
chadnezzar’s

chadnezzar's dream says, Dan. ii. 21.
 “Blessed be the name of God for ever and
 “ever, for wisdom and might are his;
 “and he changes the times, and the sea-
 “sons; he removeth kings, and setteth up
 “kings. He giveth wisdom to the wise,
 “and knowledge to them that know under-
 “standing.” Cyrus made the same ac-
 knowledgement when, in his decree for re-
 building the temple of Jerusalem, he said,
 Ezra i. 2. “Thus said Cyrus king of
 “Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath
 “given me all the kingdoms of the earth,
 “and he hath charged me to build him an
 “house at Jerusalem, in Judah.”

Power and *wisdom* are ascribed to this one
 God in the highest degree, and in the most
 emphatical manner in the books of scripture.
 Indeed, this is necessarily implied in what
 has been already recited concerning his be-
 ing the maker and governor of all things. I
 shall, however, quote a few passages with
 this view only. In Is. xxviii. 29. he is said
 to be “wonderful in counsel, and excellent
 “in working;” and in 1 Tim. i. 17. he is
 called “the only wise God,” and also in
 Rom. xvi. 27. and Jude 25. But in Is.
 xl. 12, &c. we have a most magnificent
 description of the power, wisdom, and uni-
 versal

versal supremacy of the one true God, as opposed to the objects of worship in the heathen world. “ Who hath measured
“ the waters in the hollow of his hand,
“ and meted out heaven with a span, and
“ comprehended the dust of the earth in a
“ measure, and weighed the mountains in
“ scales, and the hills in a balance. Who
“ hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or,
“ being his counsellor, hath taught him?
“ With whom took he counsel, and who
“ instructed him, and taught him in the
“ path of judgment, and taught him know-
“ ledge, and shewed him the way of un-
“ derstanding? Behold, the nations are as
“ the drop of a bucket, and are counted
“ as the small dust of the balance. Behold
“ he taketh up the isles, as a very little
“ thing. All nations before him are as
“ nothing, and they are counted to him
“ less than nothing, and vanity. To
“ whom then will ye liken God, or what
“ likeness will ye compare unto him?
“ ——— Have ye not known, have ye not
“ heard, hath it not been told you from
“ the beginning, have ye not understood
“ from the foundation of the earth? It is
“ he that sitteth upon the circle of the
“ earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as
VOL. III. C grass-

“grashoppers, that stretcheth out the hea-
 “vens as a curtain, and spreadeth them
 “out as a tent to dwell in, that bringeth
 “the princes to nothing; he maketh the
 “judges of the earth as vanity.———Lift
 “up your eyes on high, and behold, who
 “hath created these things, that bringeth
 “out their host by number; he calleth
 “them all by names, by the greatness of
 “his might, for that he is strong in power,
 “not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O
 “Jacob, and speakest O Israel, My way
 “is hid from the Lord, and my judgment
 “is passed over from my God? Hast thou
 “not known, hast thou not heard, that
 “the everlasting God, the Lord, the crea-
 “tor of the ends of the earth, fainteth not,
 “neither is weary. There is no searching
 “of his understanding. He giveth power
 “to the faint, and to them that have no
 “might he increaseth strength.”

The Gentile nations imagined that some
 gods had power over one country, and
 others over another; and even that some
 had power in the hills, and others in the
 valleys only. There are, however, two re-
 markable pieces of history in the Old Tes-
 tament, in which we find that, for the in-
 struction of the Israelites, the divine Being

par-

particularly attended to, and by the most signal displays of his own power, refuted those absurd opinions.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, imagining that the God of Israel was no other than the god of that particular country, and of no greater power than the gods of other countries, insulted Hezekiah king of Judah, which he was then about to invade, with a detail of the other kingdoms which he had lately conquered, saying, *Is. xxxvii. 10, &c.* “ Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah, king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly, and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden, which were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Iva?” Hezekiah, in his prayer to God upon this occasion, avows very different sentiments, acknowledging the supremacy

C 2

macy of the one true God, and putting his trust in him only; for laying open the letter which he had received from Sennacherib before the Lord, he prayed, saying, *Is.* xxxvii. 16. “ O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwelleth between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear, open thine eyes, O Lord, and see, and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all nations, and their countries, and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were no gods, but the work of mens hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only.”

Upon this prayer, the prophet Isaiah was sent to encourage Hezekiah, with a promise of the utter destruction of the army of Sennacherib, which was presently after accomplished, in a sudden and miraculous manner.

The Syrians having been worsted in the hilly country, during their war with the Israelites,

raelites, imagined that the God of Israel had power there, but not in the valleys ; and therefore endeavoured to bring the Israelites to an engagement in the flat country. But there came a man of God, and spake unto the King of Israel, and said, 1 Kings xx. 28. “ Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians “ have said, The Lord is God of the hills “ but he is not God of the valleys, therefore “ will I deliver all this great multitude into “ thine hand, and ye shall know that I am “ the Lord.” Accordingly the historian informs us, that, in a battle which was fought on the seventh day from that time, the Israelites gained a most signal victory over the Syrians.

It was an opinion that prevailed from very early times in the East, and which spread from thence into the western parts of the world, that the *evil* there is in the world was not the production of a good being, but arose from an evil intelligent principle, either co-ordinate with the good one, or subordinate to him ; and as the attributes of the good principle were divided, and distributed by them among a number of beings, so also invisible powers of an evil nature were multiplied, and became the object of several modes of worship. Against

this principle of idolatry the strongest declarations are made in the scriptures, which ascribe both good and evil to the same supreme Mind, who effects his excellent purposes by means of them both alike.

Thus, the divine Being, addressing himself to Cyrus (though long before that prince was born) in whose country the opinion above mentioned was most firmly established, says Is. xlv. 14. "For Jacob my
 "servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I
 "have even called thee by thy name. I
 "have surnamed thee though thou hast not
 "known me. I am the Lord, and there is
 "none else, there is no God besides me. I
 "girded thee, though thou hast not known
 "me; that they may know from the rising
 "of the sun, and from the West, that there
 "is none besides me. I am the Lord, and
 "there is none else. I form the light, and
 "create darkness; I make peace, and create
 "evil; I the Lord do all these things."
 To the same purpose Jeremiah, in Sam. iii. 38, &c. "Who is he that says, and it
 "cometh to pass, when the Lord command-
 "ed it not. Out of the mouth of the most
 "high, proceedeth not evil and good;"
 And Amos iii. 8, "Is there evil in a city,
 "and the Lord has not done it?" Job also
 is

is made to express the same sentiment, when he says, Job i. 21. "The Lord gave, and
"the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be
"the name of the Lord:" and again, Job
ii. 10. "Shall we receive good at the hand
"of the Lord, and shall we not receive
"evil?"

Lastly, in the course of the scripture history, not only all prosperous events, but also all calamitous ones are constantly ascribed to God, as the sole governor of the world, and the sovereign disposer of all events, respecting both nations and individuals of mankind. Thus the destruction of the old world by a flood, as well as the interposition in favour of Noah and his family; the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the saving of Lot; the plagues of Egypt, as well as the deliverance of the Israelites; and also all the good and evil that befel either the Israelites themselves, or the neighbouring nations with whom they had intercourse, are equally referred to the same superintending Providence, administering both good and evil, according to the characters and conduct of men.

The most striking ideas are given us in the scriptures of the *eternity*, the *omnipresence*, and *unchangeable nature* of the true God. I

shall only quote a few out of numberless passages to this purpose. Moses, in that prayer of his which makes the xcth Psalm, addresses the divine Being in the following manner. “ Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth, and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” Solomon, at the dedication of his temple, addressing the divine being, in the presence of all the people, says, 1 Kings viii. 27. “ But will God, indeed, dwell on earth? Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built.” By the prophet Jeremiah, the divine Being says, Jer. xxiii. 23. “ Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?” In Ps. xxxiii. 13. we read, “ The Lord looketh from heaven, and beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike, he considereth all their ways.”

In the cxxxixth Psalm, we have a most admirable description of the *universal presence* of God, and also of the intimate knowledge that he has of every thing belonging to man. Pf. cxxxix. 1, &c. “ O Lord, “ thou hast searched me, and known me. “ Thou knowest my down sitting, and mine “ up rising, thou understandest my thought “ afar off. Thou compasseth my path, “ and my lying down, and art acquainted “ with all my ways. For there is not a “ word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, “ thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast “ beset me behind and before, and laid thine “ hand upon me. Such knowledge is too “ wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from “ thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from “ thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, “ thou art there; if I make my bed in “ hell, behold thou art there. If I take “ the wings of the morning, and dwell in “ the uttermost parts of the sea, even there “ shall thy hand lead me, and thy right “ hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the “ darkness shall cover me, even night shall “ be light about me. Yea the darkness “ hideth not from thee, but the night “ shineth

“ shineth as the day ; the darkness and the
 “ light are both alike to thee.”

The knowledge which the divine Being has of the *hearts of men*, whatever pains they may take to conceal them, is strongly expressed in Jer. xvii. 9. “ The heart is
 “ deceitful above all things, and desperately
 “ wicked, who can know it? I, the Lord
 “ search the heart, I try the reins, to give
 “ to every man according to his ways, and
 “ according to the fruit of his doings.”

The *unchangeable nature* of God is strongly asserted by himself in Mal. iii. 6. “ I am
 “ the Lord, I change not :” and it is likewise expressed, in a peculiarly beautiful and emphatical manner, Ps. cii. 25, &c. “ Of
 “ old hast thou laid the foundations of the
 “ earth, and the heavens are the work of
 “ thine hands. They shall perish, but thou
 “ shalt endure ; yea all of them shall wax
 “ old, like a garment. As a vesture shalt
 “ thou change them, and they shall be
 “ changed ; but thou art the same, and thy
 “ years shall have no end.” The apostle James also says, Ch. i. 17. “ That with
 “ God there is no variableness, nor shadow
 “ of turning.”

Lastly, the *incomprehensible nature* of God is finely expressed in several parts of scripture,

ture, especially the following passages of the book of Job xi. 7. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? It is deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea:" xxxvi. 26. "Behold God is great, and we know him not:" xxxvii. 23. "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out." David also says, Ps. cxlv. 3, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable."

The pretences of the *heathen gods* are refuted in several parts of scripture in a most effectual, and sometimes in a very humorous manner. It is with respect to the knowledge of *future events* that the true God more especially challenges the gods of the heathens; as in Is. xli. 21, &c. "Produce your cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen; let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know

‘ that ye are gods ; yea do good or do evil,
 ‘ that we may be dismayed, and behold it
 ‘ together. Behold ye are of nothing, and
 ‘ your work of nought, an abomination is he
 “ that chooseth you.”

When it is foretold that the idols of Ba-
 bylon should be carried away captive, it is
 said, Is. xlvi. 1. “ Bel boweth down, Nebo
 “ stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts,
 “ and upon the cattel. Your carriages were
 “ heavy loaden, they are a burden to the
 “ weary beast. They stoop, they bow down
 “ together, they could not deliver the bur-
 “ den ; but themselves are gone into cap-
 “ tivity.” Jeremiah also ridicules these
 gods in a similar manner, Jer. x. 1, &c.
 “ Hear ye the word which the Lord speak-
 “ eth unto you, O house of Israel. Thus
 “ saith the Lord, learn not the way of the
 “ heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs
 “ of heaven ; for the heathen are dismayed
 “ at them. For the customs of the people
 “ are vain, for one cutteth a tree out of the
 “ forest, the work of the hands of the work-
 “ man, with the ax. They deck it with
 “ silver and with gold, they fasten it with
 “ nails and with hammers, that it move not.
 “ They are upright as the palm tree, but
 “ speak not. They must needs be borne,
 “ be-

“ because they cannot go. Be not afraid of
“ them, for they cannot do evil, neither
“ also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch
“ as there is none like unto thee, O Lord.
“ Thou art great, and thy name is great in
“ might. Who would not fear thee, O
“ king of nations, for to thee doth it apper-
“ tain.”

The overthrow of Pharaoh and his host is represented by Moses as the triumph of the true God over the false ones, Ex. xv. 2.
“ The Lord is my strength, and song, and
“ he is become my salvation:” v. 11. “ Who
“ is like unto thee, O Lord, among the
“ gods? Who is like thee, glorious in ho-
“ linefs, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”

Elijah makes use of a fine piece of irony, when he addreffes the priests of Baal, on the occasion of the conteft which he propofed between the true God and that imaginary one. When thefe priests were unable to procure a fupernatural fire, to burn their facrifices, we read 1 Kings xviii. 27. “ And
“ it came to pafs at noon, that Elijah mock-
“ ed them; and faid, Cry aloud, for he is
“ a god. Either he is talking, or he is pur-
“ fuing, or he is on a journey, or perad-
“ venture he fleepeth, and muft be waked.
“ And they cried aloud, and cut themfelves
“ after

“ after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.” At the conclusion of this affair, the people, who were exceedingly prone to idolatry, and therefore strongly prejudiced in favour of the priests of Baal, cried out, “ The Lord, he is the God, the Lord, he is the God.”

We find in the book of Daniel, that both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, though strongly attached to their idol worship, were compelled to make the same confession. See Dan. ii. xvii. iii. 29. When Daniel was delivered from the lions, we are informed, Dan. vi. 26, that then Darius wrote “ unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth. Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.”

Considering the abominably flagitious customs, and the cruel and horrid rites of the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan, and other neighbouring nations, and the shock-

ing depravity of the hearts, as well as of the lives of men, which was the necessary consequence of an adictedness to those monstrous kinds of idolatry, it is no wonder that all possible provision was made to prevent the Israelites from giving into it, and to perpetuate in that one nation the worship of the only living and true God, amidst the universal defection from his worship among all other nations.

Abraham is supposed to have been called from his country, where idolatry is generally thought to have been first introduced, about the time when it began to revolt from the worship of the true God; and it is not improbable that this was the case, as not long after we find idols among the gods of Laban, who lived in the same country, that his daughter Rachel carried some of them away with her, and that afterwards Jacob was obliged to search all his family, and command them to put away all their false gods. See Gen. xxxv. 2.

The prohibitions of idolatry by Moses are frequent, and exceedingly emphatical. Besides the first and second commandments, quoted before, we read, Ex. xxiii. 13. “ And in all things that I have said unto
“ you, be circumspect, and make no men-
“ tion

“tion of the name of other gods, neither
 “let it be heard out of thy mouth.”

The orders which the Jews received concerning the extirpation of the inhabitants of Canaan respected this case, and nothing else. The settlement of the Israelites in that country, is expressly said to have been delayed “because the iniquity of the Amorites was not full,” Gen. xv. 16. We read in Deut. xii. 29, &c. “When the
 “Lord thy God shall have cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou
 “goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; take
 “heed to thyself, that thou be not snared by following them, and that thou enquire
 “not after their gods; saying, How did these nations serve their gods, even so
 “will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so
 “unto the Lord thy God, for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth,
 “have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have
 “burned in the fire to their gods:” v. 2, &c.
 “Ye shall utterly destroy all the places
 “wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every
 “green tree. And ye shall overturn their
 “altars,

“ altars, and break their pillars, and burn
“ their groves with fire, and ye shall hew
“ down the graven images of their gods, and
“ destroy the names of them out of that
“ place.”

That their motive for this was not the
lust of plunder, is evident from the orders
which they received, and with which they
complied, not to take the silver and the
gold belonging to their idols, but to destroy
it utterly, Deut. vii. 25. “ The graven
“ images of their gods shall ye burn with
“ fire. Thou shalt not desire the silver or
“ gold that is on them, nor take it unto
“ thee; lest thou be snared therein; for it
“ is an abomination unto the Lord thy God;
“ neither shalt thou bring an abomination
“ into thine house, lest thou be a cursed
“ thing like it; but thou shalt utterly detest
“ it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it, for it
“ is an accursed thing.”

Nor were they the inhabitants of Canaan
only who were to be extirpated on account
of their idolatry; for the Israelites them-
selves were to have as little mercy shewn
them on the same account, Lev. xx. 1.
“ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
“ Again thou shalt say to the children of
“ Israel, Whosoever he be of the children
“ of

“ of Israel, or of the stranger that sojour-
“ neth in Israel, that giveth any of his seed
“ unto Moloch, he shall surely be put to
“ death, the people of the land shall stone
“ him with stones.” Deut. xiii. 6, &c. “ If
“ thy brother, the son of thy mother, or
“ thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of
“ thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as
“ thine own soul, entice thee secretly, say-
“ ing, Let us go and serve other gods,
“ which thou hast not known, thou nor thy
“ fathers, namely of the gods of the peo-
“ ple which are round about you, nigh un-
“ to thee, or far off from thee, from the
“ one end of the earth, even unto the other
“ end of the earth, thou shalt not consent
“ unto him, nor hearken unto him; nei-
“ ther shall thy eye pity him, neither shalt
“ thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal
“ him. But thou shalt surely kill him.
“ Thine hand shall be first upon him, to put
“ him to death, and afterwards the hands
“ of the people. And thou shalt stone him
“ with stones that he die, because he has
“ sought to thrust thee away from the Lord
“ thy God, who brought thee out of the
“ land of Egypt, from the house of bond-
“ age. And all Israel shall hear, and
“ fear, and shall do no more any such
wicked-

“ wickedness as this is among you. If thou
“ shalt hear say in one of the cities, which
“ the Lord thy God hath given thee to
“ dwell there, saying, Certain men, the
“ children of Belial, are gone out from
“ among you, and have withdrawn the in-
“ habitants of their city; saying, Let us go
“ and serve other gods, which ye have not
“ known. Then shalt thou inquire, and
“ make search, and ask diligently, and be-
“ hold, if it be truth, and the thing certain,
“ that such abomination is wrought among
“ you; thou shalt surely smite the inha-
“ bitants of that city with the edge of the
“ sword, destroying it utterly, and all that
“ is therein, and the cattle thereof, with
“ the edge of the sword. And thou shalt
“ gather all the spoil of it into the midst
“ of the street thereof, and shalt burn with
“ fire the city, and all the spoil thereof,
“ every whit, for the Lord thy God; and
“ it shall be an heap for ever, It shall not
“ be built again. And there shall cleave
“ nought of the cursed thing to thine hand,
“ that the Lord may turn from the fierce-
“ ness of his anger, and shew thee mercy,
“ and have compassion upon thee, and mul-
“ tiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fa-
“ thers; when thou shalt hearken to the
“ voice

“ of the Lord thy God, to keep all his com-
“ mandments, which I command thee this
“ day, to do that which is right in the eyes
“ of the Lord thy God.”

These were certainly severe and awful measures, but they are abundantly vindicated by the consideration of the evils which they were intended to prevent. These evils were indeed of the most alarming nature, defeating the very end of the whole Jewish constitution, which was especially calculated to preserve the knowledge and worship of the one true God amidst a general defection from it, and to put a stop to the progress of the most abominable and destructive vices, which was the necessary consequence of that defection.

The divine displeasure at idolatry was likewise expressed by the utter destruction of all the idolatrous nations of ancient times, viz. the Canaanites, Egyptians, Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Tyrians; and also by the repeated captivities, and other awful judgments, which never failed to be inflicted upon the Israelites themselves, whenever they revolted from the one true God.

In the New Testament these awful denunciations of the judgments of God against idolatry, are not repeated with respect to
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the Jews, because that people had been effectually cured of their proneness to idolatry by the Babylonish captivity ; but we see the same sentiments kept up, and referred to, upon every proper occasion, and very pressing exhortations and cautions are given to the Gentile churches, respecting this subject. Our Lord replies to his tempter, by quoting the books of Moses, Mat. iv. 10. “ Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” The abstaining from meats offered to idols, was one of the *necessary things* which all the apostles enjoined upon the Gentile converts, Acts xv. 29. The apostle Paul most earnestly and affectionately warns the Corinthian converts on this subject, 1 Cor. x. 7. “ Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them (that is the Israelites) were :” v. 14. “ Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry :” v. 19. “ What say I then, that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing. But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons*, and not to God ; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons, Ye cannot be partakers

* For so it ought to have been translated.

“ of the Lord’s table, and of the table of
“ demons.” The apostle John also concludes
his General Epistle to the christian churches
with these words, 1 John v. 21. “ Little
“ children, keep yourselves from idols.”
Lastly, the eating of meat sacrificed to
idols was one of the charges which our
Lord, after his ascension, brought against
the churches of Pergamos, and Thyatira,
Rev. ii. 14. 20.

Through the whole of the New Testa-
ment, there is not so much as one example
of any invisible being, who is addressed as
the object of prayer, but the same one living
and true God, who is also called “ the God
“ and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”
(Eph. iii. 14. “ For this cause I bow my
“ knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus
“ Christ,”) and every instance of homage
approaching to divine is strongly repressed.
When Cornelius fell down at the feet of
Peter, though it cannot be supposed that
he who was himself a worshipper of the
true God, meant to pay him divine ho-
nours, the apostle replied, Acts x. 26,
“ Stand up, I myself also am a man.” And
twice that John fell down before the angel
who was explaining to him the visions of
the book of Revelation, he was rebuked in
the

the same manner, Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 8.
“ See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-
“ servant, and of thy brethren, who have
“ the testimony of Jesus, worship God.”

Considering how strongly this great article, the worship of one God only, is guarded in all the books of scripture, it would seem impossible that it should ever be infringed by any who profess to hold the books of the Old and New Testament for the rule of their faith and practice; and yet we shall see, in the course of this work, that this very article was the subject of one of the first and the most radical of all the corruptions of christianity. For upon the very same principles, and in the very same manner, by which dead men came to be worshipped by the ancient idolaters, there was introduced into the christian church, in the first place, the idolatrous worship of Jesus Christ, then that of the Virgin Mary, and lastly that of innumerable other saints, and of angels also; and this *modern christian idolatry* has been attended with all the absurdities, and with *some*, but not *all* the immoralities, of the ancient heathen idolatry. It has, however, evidently promoted a very great neglect of the duties we owe both to God and man.

SECTION II.

Of the moral attributes of God.

THAT God is a being of the greatest purity and rectitude is another important doctrine of revealed religion ; and though, like the doctrine of the divine unity, it may be said to be the dictate of nature, it was a doctrine which mankind had in a great measure overlooked, and never sufficiently attended to. Entertaining low notions of the beings on whom they supposed that they immediately depended, and ascribing to them a great variety of objects and pursuits, some of which were exceedingly trifling and unworthy, they had recourse to a variety of methods by which they thought to recommend themselves to their favour, many of which had no connection with moral virtue, and some of them were gross violations of the most fundamental rules of it.

Judging

Judging of their gods as having been, many of them, men no better than themselves, but subject to envy and jealousy, they were in general more especially prone to that kind of superstition which consists in mortifying themselves, in order to recommend them to God. If any great calamity befel them, imagining the wrath of their gods was to be appeased, like that of revengeful and unreasonable men, with something that cost them very dear, they sometimes did not spare their own children, but put them to a cruel death in their sacrifices; and they made dreadful havock of the rest of their species on much less occasions.

In the Jewish and christian revelations, on the contrary, we see the moral character of the divine Being set in the clearest, the strongest, and most amiable light. We find that the God with whom we have to do loves all his creatures; that if he chastises them it is with reluctance, and only for their good, and especially for their improvement in virtue; that he stands in no need of any of his creatures, and has no pleasure either in the compliments they pay him, or the gifts and sacrifices which they make to him, though, as an expression of their

VOL. III. D homage

homage, dependance, and gratitude, he may think proper to require such things.

The proper seat of virtue and solid happiness being in the heart, the divine Being, as his character is revealed to us in our books of scripture, appears to be most solicitous that our hearts and affections be right, and not to pay much attention to mere external actions, which was every thing that the heathen gods were imagined to trouble themselves about. On the contrary, the God of the Jews and christians is always represented as searching the hearts, and as attending to the inmost thoughts, inclinations, and purposes of the mind; so that no secret or intended iniquity can escape his animadversion.

In order to exhibit the doctrine of the scriptures concerning the moral attributes of God, I shall, first consider his *purity* or *holiness*, including his regard to moral virtue in general, and then his goodness, mercy, and veracity, in the order in which they are here mentioned.

Passages which express the purity or holiness of God in general, are exceedingly numerous, and many of them very emphatical; as Lev. xix. 2. "Ye shall be holy, for the Lord your God is holy." The angels, in the vision of Isaiah, vi. 3. are repre-

represented as crying one to another,
“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts,
“the whole earth is full of his glory.
Moses, in that remarkable song which he
composed for the Israelites, in order that
they might commit it to memory, says
Deut. xxxii. 3. “I will publish the name
“of the Lord, Ascribe ye greatness unto
“our God. He is the rock, his work is
“perfect, for all his ways are judgment,
“a God of truth, and without iniquity,
“just and right is he.” Habbakuk, ad-
dressing himself to God, says, ch. i. 12.
“Art not thou from everlasting, my God,
“my holy one. Thou art of purer eyes
“than to behold evil, and canst not look on
“iniquity.” When David enumerates the
particulars which constitute the character of
the man who is most in favour with God,
he draws a picture of the most distinguished
moral virtue, Ps. xv. 1, &c. “Lord who
“shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall
“dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh
“uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and
“speaketh the truth in his heart, &c.”
Lastly, the apostle James says, ch. i. 13.
“Let no man say when he is tempted, I
“am tempted of God, for God cannot be
“tempted with evil, neither tempteth he
“any man.”

A thousand passages in the scriptures express the pleasure which God takes in good men, and the happiness which he reserves for them, Ps. cxlvii. 11. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." Ps. xxxvii. 23, 24. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Ps. ciii. 13. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Ps. lxxxiv. 11. "The Lord God is a sun, and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." On the other hand, the wicked are always represented as the sole objects of the divine displeasure and vengeance, as Is. xlviii. 22, and lvii. 21. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." And all the judgments which the divine Being is represented as interposing to inflict, are always said to have been on the account of wickedness only, as in the case of our first parents, the inhabitants of the old world, the people of Sodom and

and Gomorrah, the Canaanites, and many others.

Whereas the favour of the heathen gods was supposed to be gained by the performance of certain rites and ceremonies, while moral virtue was seldom thought to be of any use for that purpose; the contrary is expressed, in the strongest terms, with respect to the true God; and admonitions of this kind are repeated again and again in the books of scripture. David, confessing his sin before God, says, Ps. li. 16. “Thou
“desirest not sacrifice, else would I give
“it, thou delightest not in burnt offerings.
“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
“a broken and a contrite heart, O God,
“thou wilt not despise.” One of the finest passages in the sacred writings to this purpose is Is. i. 13, &c. “Hear the word of
“the Lord ye rulers of Sodom, give ear to
“the law of our God ye people of Go-
“morrah. To what purpose is the multi-
“tude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the
“the Lord, I am full of the burnt offerings
“of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I
“delight not in the blood of bullocks, or
“of lambs, or of the goats. When ye
“come to appear before me, who hath re-
“quired this at your hand, to tread my
D 3 “courts.

“ courts. Bring no more vain oblations.
“ Incense is an abomination to me ; the
“ new moons and sabbaths ; the calling of
“ assemblies, I cannot away with, it is ini-
“ quity, even the solemn meeting. Your
“ new moons and your appointed feasts my
“ soul hateth. They are a trouble unto me,
“ I am weary to bear them. And when ye
“ spread forth your hands I will hide mine
“ eyes from you ; yea when ye make many
“ prayers, I will not hear ; your hands are
“ full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean,
“ put away the evil of your doings from
“ before mine eyes ; cease to do evil, learn
“ to do well, seek judgment, relieve the
“ oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for
“ the widow. Come now, and let us rea-
“ son together, saith the Lord, though
“ your sins be as scarlet they shall be as
“ white as snow, though they be red like
“ crimson, they shall be as wool.” The
same sentiment is also admirably expressed
in Micah vi. 6, &c. “ Wherewith shall I
“ come before the Lord, and bow myself
“ before the high God ? Shall I come be-
“ fore him with burnt offerings, with calves
“ of a year old ? Will the Lord be pleased
“ with thousands of rams, or with ten thou-
“ sands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my
“ first

“ first born for my transgression, the fruit
“ of my body for the sin of my soul. He
“ hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;
“ and what doth the Lord require of thee,
“ but to do justly, and to love mercy, and
“ to walk humbly with thy God.” To the
same purpose see also Ps. l. Jer. vii. 2. Hos.
vi. 6. and Amos v. 21.

In the New Testament, we find John the Baptist exposing the vain confidence of the Jews, on account of their having Abraham for their father, Matt. iii. 9. and our Saviour also, when they made the same boast, in his presence, says, John viii. 29. “ If ye
“ were Abraham’s children, ye would do
“ the works of Abraham. Ye are of your
“ father the devil, and the lusts of your
“ father ye will do.” Again, speaking of his natural relations, he says, Mat. xii. 50.
“ He that doeth the will of God, the
“ same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

If we consider the great object and end of all the parts of the scheme of revelation, we cannot but see that it was intended to promote the practice of moral virtue, in order to men’s attaining to the greatest degrees of perfection and happiness. The ten commandments, which God spake from

Sinai, are all of a moral, and most of them of a social nature. His earnest exhortations to the Israelites, through the whole of the book of Deuteronomy, enforces the practice of virtue in the strongest manner; and so do all the writings of the prophets. The purport of their earnest exhortations is, “Cease to do evil, learn to do well; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; why will ye die, O house of Israel.”

Repentance, and works meet for repentance, was the chief subject of John the Baptist’s preaching, and also that of our Saviour. Our Lord’s admirable sermon on the mount, consists chiefly of precepts of the most sublime moral virtue; and he represents the fate of all mankind at the last day, as determined by a regard to their moral character only, and especially their benevolence.

Whenever the general design of the gospel is mentioned, it is always spoken of as intended to reform and bless mankind. Thus the apostle Peter, in his address to the Jews, after the effusion of the spirit on the day of Pentecost, says, Acts iii. 26. “God, having raised up his son Jesus, hath sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” To the same

same purpose the apostle Paul, Titus ii. 11.
“ The grace of God, that bringeth salva-
“ tion, hath appeared unto all men, teach-
“ ing us that, denying ungodliness, and
“ worldly lusts, we should live soberly,
“ righteously, and godly in this present
“ world, looking for that blessed hope, and
“ the glorious appearing of the great God,
“ and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave
“ himself for us, that he might redeem us
“ from all iniquity, and purify unto him-
“ self a peculiar people, zealous of good
“ works.” And our Lord himself says,
John xv. viii. “ Herein is my Father glo-
“ rified, that ye bring forth much fruit.”

Lastly, it is impossible that the practice of universal virtue, absolute or relative, should be more strongly enforced than it is in all the apostolical epistles, and especially towards the close of them. See Rom. ii. 4, &c. 12. 1 Cor. vi. 9, &c. Eph. i. 4. v. 2, &c. 1 Thes. v. 22, the epistle of James throughout, 1 Pet. ii. 11, &c. 1 John iv. 20.

It is in vain that we look for any thing that can be compared with this in any system of heathen religion. Almost the best that can be said of them is, that they enjoin practices that are merely idle and insigni-

nificant ; for too often they countenance the most destructive vices.

SECTION III.

Of the goodness of God.

THE goodness of God seems to be pretty clearly inferred from a view of the works of creation ; a benevolent design being sufficiently manifest in every thing that we understand. Indeed the great mixture that we see of *apparent evil* is apt to stagger even well disposed minds, especially when themselves are affected by it ; but in the scriptures we see all these doubts removed. All events are promiscuously ascribed to God ; but his intention is represented as being good and kind, even when his proceedings are the most severe. David, addressing himself to God, says, Ps. cxix. 68. “ Thou art good, and doest good.” Ps. cxlix. 9. “ The Lord is good to all, and his “ tender mercies are over all his works.” Ps. xxxiii. 5. “ The earth is full of the
“ good,

“goodness of the Lord,” Ps. cxlv. 15.

“The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou

“givest them their meat in due season.

“Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest

“the desires of every living thing.”

Our Lord says, Matt. xix. 17, “There
“is none good but one, that is God;” and
in his sermon upon the mount, he enforces
the duty of universal benevolence by the
consideration of that of our heavenly Father,
Matt. v. 45, “That ye may be the chil-
“dren of your Father who is in heaven;
“for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil
“and on the good, and sendeth rain on the
“just and on the unjust.” The apostle
John expresses himself in the most empha-
tical manner concerning this subject, when
he says, 1 John iv. 16, “We have known,
“and believed the love that God hath to
“us. God is love, and he that dwelleth
“in love, dwelleth in God, and God in
“him.” And the apostle James says, ch.
i. 17. “Every good gift and every perfect
“gift is from above, and cometh down
“from the Father of lights.”

The severity with which good men are
sometimes treated, is always represented in
the scriptures as the correction of a tender
father, intended to promote the reformation

and good of his children ; and what he always inflicts with reluctance. Jeremiah says, Lam. iii. 3. “ The Lord will not cast
“ off for ever, for though he cause grief,
“ yet will he have compassion, according
“ to the multitude of his mercies ; for he
“ does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the
“ children of men.” The prophet Hosea draws a most affecting picture of the painful reluctance with which the divine Being has recourse to severity, after the most aggravated and repeated provocations, Hosea xi. 1, &c. “ When Israel was a child, then
“ I loved him, and called my son out of
“ Egypt——They sacrificed unto Ba-
“ alim, and burnt incense to graven images.
“ I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them
“ by their arms ; but they knew not that I
“ healed them. I drew them with cords
“ of a man, with bands of love——My
“ people are bent to backsliding from me.
“ Though they called them to the most
“ High, none at all would exalt him. How
“ shall I give thee up, Ephraim, how shall
“ I deliver thee, Israel ; how shall I make
“ thee as Admah ; how shall I set thee as
“ Zeboim. Mine heart is turned within
“ me, my repentings are kindled together.
“ I will not execute the fierceness of mine
“ anger,

“ anger, I will not return to destroy E-
“ phraim; for I am God and not man, the
“ holy One in the midst of thee.”

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, also, reminds the persecuted christians of his age, of these comforting sentiments, so peculiarly proper to their circumstances, Heb. xii. 5, &c. “ Ye have forgotten the exhorta-
“ tion which speaketh unto you as unto
“ children. My son, despise not thou the
“ chastening of the Lord, neither faint
“ when thou art rebuked of him. For
“ whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and
“ scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.
“ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth
“ with you as with sons. For what son is
“ he whom the father chasteneth not.—
“ Now no chastening for the present seem-
“ eth to be joyous but grievous; neverthe-
“ less afterward it yieldeth the peaceable
“ fruit of righteousness, unto them who are
“ exercised thereby.”

Lastly, the dispensation of the gospel is always represented as an instance of the exceedingly great love and goodness of God, John iii. 16. “ God so loved the world,
“ that he gave his only begotten son, that
“ whosoever believeth in him should not
“ perish, but have everlasting life.” I John
iv. 9.

iv. 9. "In this was manifested the love of
 " God towards us, because that God sent
 " his only begotten son into the world, that
 " we might live through him. Herein is
 " love, not that we loved God, but that
 " he loved us," Rom. viii. 32. "He that
 " spared not his own son, but delivered
 " him up for us all, how shall he not,
 " with him, also freely give us all things."

S E C T I O N IV.

Of the mercy of God.

THE mercy of God to those who are disposed to return to their duty, when they have once rendered themselves obnoxious to his displeasure by their offences, is a subject of which mankind, especially those whose minds were rendered timid and fearful by a consciousness of guilt, would be more apt to entertain doubts, than of the goodness of God in general. No proof by way of *inference* only, how short and plain soever, would be sufficient

cient for such persons; and yet it is easy to see, that it is of the utmost importance, that such persons should receive all possible satisfaction with respect to it; lest, through a distrust of the mercy of God, they should be driven into absolute despair. Besides, nothing is so engaging, and furnishes so powerful a motive to a return to duty, as a thorough persuasion of the clemency of the offended party. On this account, probably, it is, that the declarations of the mercy of God, to the truly penitent, are so remarkably full and explicit in the scriptures, in so much that no doubt can possibly remain with respect to it.

At the very time of the promulgation of the law of Moses, which is deemed to be the most rigorous of all the divine dispensations, when Moses waited in mount Sinai with the second tables of stone, immediately after that most aggravated offence of the Israelites in making the golden calf, the divine Being makes the most solemn declaration of his mercy imaginable, Ex. xxxiv. 5, &c. “ And the Lord descended in the
“ cloud, and stood with him there, and
“ proclaimed the name of the Lord. And
“ the Lord passed by before him, and pro-
“ claimed, The Lord, the Lord God,
“ merciful and gracious, long suffering, and
“ abun-

“ abundant in goodness and truth, keep-
“ ing mercy for thousands, forgiving ini-
“ quity, and transgression, and sin.”

When Moses foretells the final dispersion of the Israelites, in consequence of their idolatry, and other vices, he at the same time gives them the most solemn assurances of the divine favour in case of their repentance. I shall quote two remarkable passages for this purpose Deut. iv. 25, &c.

“ When thou shalt beget children, and
“ childrens children, and shalt have re-
“ mained long in the land, and shalt cor-
“ rupt yourselves, and make a graven
“ image, or the likeness of any thing, and
“ shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy
“ God, to provoke him to anger; I call
“ heaven and earth to witness against you
“ this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish
“ from off the land whereunto ye go over
“ Jordan to possess it, ye shall not prolong
“ your days upon it, but shall utterly be
“ destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you
“ among the nations, and you shall be left
“ few in number among the heathen, whi-
“ ther the Lord shall lead you. And there
“ you shall serve gods, the work of mens
“ hands, wood and stone, which neither see
“ nor hear, nor eat nor smell. But if from
“ thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God,
“ thou

“ thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with
“ all thine heart, and with all thy soul.
“ When thou art in tribulation, and all
“ these things are come upon thee, even
“ in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord
“ thy God and shalt be obedient unto his
“ voice (for the Lord thy God is a merciful
“ God) he will not forsake thee, neither des-
“ troy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy
“ fathers, which he sware unto them.” Deut.
xxx. 1, &c. “ And it shall come to pass
“ when all these things are come upon thee,
“ the blessing and the curse which I have
“ set before thee, and thou shalt call them
“ to mind, among all the nations whither
“ the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and
“ shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and
“ shalt obey his voice, according to all that
“ I shall command thee this day, thou and
“ thy children, with all thine heart, and
“ with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy
“ God will turn thy captivity, and have
“ compassion upon thee, and will return,
“ and gather thee from all the nations
“ whither the Lord thy God hath scattered
“ thee. If any of thine be driven out unto
“ the utmost parts of heaven, from thence
“ will the Lord thy God gather thee, and
“ from thence will he fetch thee. And
“ the

“ the Lord thy God will bring thee into
 “ the land which thy fathers possessed, and
 “ thou shalt possess it, and he will do thee
 “ good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.”

To these promises Daniel had recourse, when he made confession and prayer to God on the behalf of Israel, during the Babylonish captivity Dan. ix. 8, &c. “ O Lord, “ to us belongeth confusion of face, to “ our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. “ To the Lord our God belong mercies and “ forgivenesses, though we have rebelled “ against him.” The prophet Jeremiah also repeats the same promises of mercy and restoration, with a view to the same case, Jer. iii. 12, &c. “ Go and proclaim these “ words towards the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the “ Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to “ fall upon you, for I am merciful saith “ the Lord, and I will keep not anger for “ ever———Turn, O backsliding children, “ saith the Lord, for I am married unto you, “ and I will take you one of a city, and two “ of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.”

The declarations of divine mercy to penitent offenders, upon a great variety of occasions, in the course of the Jewish history, and

and especially in the book of Psalms, and of the prophets, who wrote in times of great degeneracy, are remarkably emphatical; and to give us the stronger foundation for our confidence in the divine mercy it is always represented as arising *from himself only*, from that love and compassion which is essential to his nature, and which he bears to all the works of his hands. We cannot so much as collect from any of them the most distant hint of its arising from any foreign consideration whatever; and this was certainly a matter of the greatest consequence; since a suspicion of this kind would tend to beget an idea of uncertainty, or partiality in the distribution of the divine mercy.

Indeed every idea of this nature seems to be expressly excluded in several passages of scripture, as in that declaration which the divine Being makes by the prophet Isaiah, xliii. 22, &c. “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel——Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions *for mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins.” David, it is evident, had no other idea when he prayed for the forgiveness.

giveness of his sins, Ps. xxv. 6, &c.
 “Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies,
 “and thy loving kindneses, for they have
 “been ever of old. Remember not the
 “sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;
 “according to thy mercy remember thou
 “me, *for thy goodness sake*, O Lord. Good
 “and upright is the Lord, therefore will he
 “teach sinners in the way. The meek will
 “he guide in judgment, and the meek will
 “he teach his way. All the paths of the
 “Lord are mercy and truth unto such as
 “keep his covenant and his testimonies.
 “*For thy name’s sake*, O lord, pardon mine
 “iniquity, for it is great.”

On this most important and agreeable subject, I shall quote a few more passages, Ps. ciii. 8, &c. “The Lord is merciful and
 “gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous
 “in mercy. He will not always chide,
 “neither will he keep his anger for ever.
 “He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
 “nor rewarded us according to our iniqui-
 “ties. For as the heaven is high above the
 “earth, so great is his mercy towards them
 “that fear him. As far as the east is from
 “the west, so far has he removed our trans-
 “gressions from us. Like as a father pi-
 “tieth his children, so the Lord pitieth
 “them

“ them that fear him ; for he knoweth our
“ frame, he remembereth that we are but
“ dust.” Ps. lxxxvi. 5. “ For thou, Lord,
“ art good, and ready to forgive.” Is. lv.
6, &c. “ Seek ye the Lord while he may
“ be found, call ye upon him while he is
“ near. Let the wicked forsake his way,
“ and the unrighteous man his thoughts,
“ and let him return unto the Lord, and he
“ will have mercy upon him, and to our
“ God, for he will abundantly pardon.”
Ez. xxxiii. 11. “ As I live, saith the Lord
“ God, I have no pleasure in the death of
“ the wicked, but that the wicked turn
“ from his way and live. Turn ye, turn
“ ye, from your evil ways ; for why will
“ ye die O house of Israel :” v. 14, &c.
“ When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt
“ surely die, if he turn from his sin, and
“ do that which is lawful and right : If the
“ wicked restore the pledge, give again that
“ he had robbed, walk in the statutes of
“ life without committing iniquity, he shall
“ surely live, he shall not die. None of his
“ sins that he hath committed shall be
“ mentioned unto him ; he hath done that
“ which is lawful and right, he shall surely
“ live.” Ez. xviii. 31, &c. “ Cast away
“ from you all your transgressions, where-
“ by

“ by ye have transgressed, and make you
 “ a new heart and a new spirit; for why
 “ will ye die, O house of Israel. For I
 “ have no pleasure in the death of him that
 “ dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn
 “ yourselves, and live ye.”

These passages certainly express more than a *willingness*, they discover a most *earnest desire* of the divine Being, that sinners should repent and be happy. I shall therefore close these quotations with only one more from Micah vii. 18, &c. “ Who is a
 “ God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression
 “ of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he
 “ delighteth in mercy. He will turn again,
 “ he will have compassion upon us; he will
 “ subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast
 “ all their sins into the depths of the
 “ sea.”

The mercy of God appears not only in such full *declarations* as these, but likewise in the history of his *conduct*, as recorded in the Old Testament. As often as the Israelites repented, after suffering for their frequent apostacies, so often did they find mercy. This was the case in a remarkable manner with king Manasseh, and also with
 Ahab;

Ahab ; nor was this grace confined to the Israelites. The inhabitants of Nineveh obtained the same favour on the same equitable terms ; for upon Jonah's proclamation, that within forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, we read, Jonah iii. 6, &c. that “ the people of Nineveh believed “ God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on “ sack cloth, from the greatest of them “ even to the least of them ; and that the “ king of Nineveh arose from his throne, “ and laid his robe from him, and covered “ him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, and “ caused it to be proclaimed, and published “ through Nineveh, by the decree of the “ king and his nobles, saying, Let neither “ man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any “ thing ; let them not feed nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered “ with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto “ God ; yea let them turn every one from “ his evil way, and from the violence that “ is in his hands. Who can tell if God “ will turn and repent, and turn away from “ his fierce anger, that we perish not. And “ God saw their works, that they turned “ from their evil way, and God repented “ of the evil that he had said that he would “ do unto them, and he did it not.” Jonah him-

himself was displeased that his prediction was not literally fulfilled; but the acknowledgment which he makes why he was unwilling to undertake the commission, is much to our present purpose, ch. iv. 1, &c. “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country; therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.”

The abovementioned declarations of mercy to the penitent, were delivered under the Jewish dispensation, and no person will imagine that they were restricted under the gospel. John the Baptist, the forerunner of our Lord, our Lord himself, and also his apostles, all opened their respective commissions with the doctrine of repentance for the remission of sins, Matt. iii. 1. “In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:” and v. 8. “Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.” Ch. iv. 17. “From that time Jesus began
“for

“ for to preach, and to say, Repent, for
“ the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” It
is not possible to give a more striking or
more beautiful illustration of the propi-
tious nature of the divine Being, than our
Lord has done in the parable of the prodi-
gal son, in which we are informed, Luke
xv. 17, that as soon as this profligate
youth came to himself, and to a resolution
to return his father, and to say, “ Father
“ I have sinned against heaven, and before
“ thee, and am no more worthy to be called
“ thy son, that, while he was yet a great
“ way off, his father saw him, and had
“ compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck,
“ and kissed him.” The Lord’s prayer,
and the illustration of it by our Lord him-
self, Matt. vi. 14. assures us that if we for-
give men their trespasses, our heavenly Fa-
ther will also forgive us. The same doc-
trine is repeated and enforced by him in his
parable of the king who took account of
his servants, one of whom owed him ten
thousand talents. Matt. xviii. 23.

The apostle Peter, at the close of his first
speech, to a great multitude of Jews, who
were assembled on the report of the first
great miracle that was wrought after the
ascension of our Lord, viz. the effusion of

the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, says, Acts ii. 38. “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” The same apostle, speaking of the divine Being says, 2 Pet. iii. 9, “God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;” and to quote no more, the apostle John says, 1 John i. 8, &c. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

SECTION IV.

Of the divine veracity.

THE last of the moral attributes of the divine Being, of which I shall take particular notice, is his *veracity*, or regard to truth, and his fidelity with respect to his promises and engagements. Of this we can have no direct knowledge from the light

light of nature, though we infer from it that we should have reason to depend upon the truth of all declarations of the divine Being, if he should think proper to make any; but in the scriptures we find both the most exprefs declarations concerning the veracity and faithfulness of God, and likewise a sufficient number of facts corresponding to those declarations.

In Is. lxxv. 16, he is called the *the God of truth*. It is said of him, Ps. cxlvi. 6, “he keepeth truth for ever;” and he himself says, Ps. lxxxix. 34, “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips:” and Is. xlv. 11. “I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it; and will also do it.” Lastly, we read, Heb. vi. 18, “It is impossible for God to lye.”

With respect to *facts*, it is sufficient to say, that no instance is mentioned of the divine Being having ever failed to fulfil any promise that he ever made, respecting either individuals or nations of mankind; but a great variety of facts are recorded, in which the performance exactly corresponds to the engagement. I shall recite only one of them. After the children of Israel were settled in the land of Canaan, it is said,

Joshua xxi. 43, “ and the Lord gave unto
“ Israel all the land which he sware to
“ give unto their fathers, and they possessed
“ it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord
“ gave them rest round about, according
“ to all that he sware unto their fathers ;
“ and there stood not a man of all their
“ enemies before them, the Lord delivered
“ all their enemies into their hand. There
“ failed not ought of any good thing which
“ the Lord had spoken unto the house of
“ Israel ; all came to pass.”

On such ground as this (the Jewish and christian religions having been proved to be divine) we have sufficient reason to depend upon the truth of those divine declarations, the time for the accomplishment of which is not yet come ; especially with respect to the grand catastrophe of the whole scheme, viz. that there will be a resurrection of all the dead, followed by an ample reward for the righteous, and an adequate punishment for the wicked.

P A R T II.

OF THE DUTY WHICH GOD REQUIRES OF
MAN.

THE unity, and the moral attributes of God being so clearly revealed to us in the scriptures, we naturally expect that the chief thing which he will require of man will be purity of heart, and integrity of life, or the genuine principles, the uniform practice, and the confirmed habits of all moral virtue; comprehending an unfeigned reverence and love of himself, the highest respect for his authority, and a humble and chearful submission to all the dispensations of his providence, together with all the natural expressions of our dependence upon him and obligation to him. We might also expect that he would require of us a sincere regard to the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and all those actions which naturally arise from that generous principle, viz. all the duties of justice, equity,

equity, and humanity. Lastly, we might expect that his authority should be interposed in favour of those virtues which more immediately respect ourselves, and the government of our appetites and passions; so that in all things we be chaste and temperate, no slaves to violent and unreasonable passions, or to any affection of mind by which we might debase our natures, or expose ourselves to the temptation of disturbing and injuring others.

SECTION I.

Of the duty of man with respect to God.

THE duties of piety, or devotion, consisting of a right disposition of mind with respect to God, and the actions which flow from that disposition, are, in a manner, peculiar to the Jewish and christian religions; being almost unknown to the Gentile world. But in the scriptures very great stress is deservedly laid upon them.

In

In general, the fear and love of God; and an habitual regard to his inspection, authority, and example, are represented in the scriptures as the most effectual guard, and the most powerful and animating principle of virtue; and every branch of virtue is constantly spoken of as his express command, and as an observance of the laws which he has thought proper to prescribe as the rule of our conduct. Sentiments of this kind are expressed with an infinite diversity of manner through the whole of the Old and New Testament; so that the difference, in this respect, between the books of scripture and the best moral pieces of the heathen writers is exceedingly striking.

When Joseph was tempted to commit adultery in the most private manner, he replied, Gen. xxxix. 9, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Solomon also says, Prov. ix. 10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:" and Prov. xvi. 6, "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." We are exhorted to be "holy because God is holy," Lev. xix. 2. 1 Pet. i. 16, "to be perfect as our father who is in heaven is perfect," Matt. v. 48, and also to

“ be followers of God, as his dear children,” Eph. v. 1. “ And, for this reason, “ to be kind to one another, tender heart-
 “ ed, forgiving one another; even as God “ in Christ has freely forgiven us.” Ch. iv. 32.

On the other hand, it is mentioned as characteristic of the wicked, that “ the fear “ of God is not before his eyes,” Ps. xxxvi. 1. and “ that God is not in all his thoughts,” Ps. x. 4.

The disposition of mind which we are required to cultivate, with respect to God, is represented in the scriptures as a mixture of filial reverence, love, and confidence, as to a most affectionate father, and equitable moral governor; and has in it nothing of that terror and anxiety, which is inspired by a subjection to a cruel or capricious being. On this account, we are sometimes commanded to “ serve the Lord with fear, “ and to rejoice with trembling,” Ps. ii. 11, and at other times to “ serve him with glad-
 “ nefs,” Ps. c. 2. Upon the whole, it means a perfect attachment of soul to this greatest and best of beings, so as to have no will but his, and to respect no interest or authority whatever in comparison with his.

Our

Our Lord, quoting from the law of Moses, says, that “ the first and greatest commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” Matt. xxii. 37; and we are exhorted by him, Matt. x. 28, “ not to fear them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but to fear him who is able to cast both soul and body into hell.” Upon this principle the apostles Peter and John say with confidence to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, Acts iv. 19, “ Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye.”

This habitual regard to God, and entire confidence in him, is also represented as the best support of the mind under all the difficulties and trials of life. David says, Ps. xvi. 18, “ I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. The prophet Isaiah, exciting to confidence in God, says, ch. xxxvi. 3, “ Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.” Solomon also gives this excellent advice, Prov. iii. 5, &c. “ Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to

“ thine own understanding. In all thy
 “ ways acknowledge him, and he shall di-
 “ rect thy paths :” and the apostle Peter en-
 courages christians, in time of trial, to “ cast
 “ their care upon God, who careth for
 “ them.” 1 Pet. v. 7.

From a firm persuasion that every thing
 is under the direction of a wise and good
 providence, we find, in the scriptures, such
 expressions of hope, joy, and even exulta-
 tion, in the most calamitous and trying
 scenes, as heathens could have no idea of ;
 because they had no principles from which
 such sentiments and language could possibly
 flow. The calm acquiescence of Job under
 a most afflictive dispensation of divine pro-
 vidence, has been mentioned already. When
 Eli heard a message from God by Samuel,
 the import of which was the greatest cala-
 mity that could befall his family, he re-
 plied, 1 Sam. iii. 18, “ It is the Lord, let
 “ him do what seemeth him good.” The
 prophet Habbakuk gives us a most admir-
 able description, not merely of the acquies-
 cence, but of the cheerfulness with which
 afflictive providences should be borne, ch.
 iii. 17, “ Although the fig-tree shall not
 “ blossom, neither shall fruit be in the
 “ vines, the labour of the olive shall fail,
 “ and

“ and the field shall yield no meat; the
“ flock shall be cut off from the fold, and
“ there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet
“ will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in
“ the God of my salvation.” David gives
the general ground of this satisfaction and
confidence in the most obscure scenes of
providence, when he says, Ps. xcvi. 1,
&c. “ The Lord reigneth, let the earth re-
“ joice, let the inhabitants of the isles be
“ glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are
“ round about him, righteousness and
“ judgment are the habitation of his
“ throne.”

On the foundation of this firm persua-
sion of the favour of God to the righteous,
and the certainty of the reward which he
reserves for them, our Lord encourages his
followers to the most chearful bearing of
persecution for conscience sake, Matt. v.
10, &c. “ Blessed are they who are per-
“ secuted for righteousness sake, for theirs
“ is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are
“ ye when men shall revile you, and perse-
“ cute you, and shall say all manner of evil
“ against you, falsely, for my sake. Re-
“ joice, and be exceedingly glad, for great
“ is your reward in heaven; for so perse-
“ cuted they the prophets who were before
E 6 “ you.”

“you.” Our Lord took the most effectual method to inculcate an entire submission to the will of God, by directing it to be the subject of our daily prayers, Matt. vi. 10, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;” and he exhibited an example of this entire submission in a scene of the greatest distress to which it is probable that human nature was ever subjected, I mean in his agony in the garden, when “his soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death;” when yet he prayed saying, Matt. xxvi. 39, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” And again, in his second prayer on that occasion, v. 42, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” Lastly, the apostle James makes use of exhortations exactly similar to those of our Saviour in the case of persecution, 1 James ii. 12, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” And the apostle Peter, on the same occasion, says,

1 Pet.

1 Pet. iii. 14, "If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

The propriety of *praying* to God is far from being satisfactorily proved from the light of nature, and much less can the obligation of it, as a moral duty, be strictly demonstrated upon those principles. Had the practice appeared ever so desirable, the humble and the diffident might have thought it too presumptuous, as much as others would have thought it unnecessary. It is therefore with peculiar satisfaction that, in the scriptures, we find all the indigent and dependent race of mankind encouraged in the freest and most constant access to God by prayer. And notwithstanding the infinite distance that subsists between the divine Being as our creator, and us as his creatures, in the whole of the scripture history, he appears in the condescending and amiable character of our *Father*, as ready to attend to our wants, as he is able to supply them; being to us, in reality, what our occasions require him to be; insomuch that, though he is represented as knowing every thing that we can tell him, even the thoughts of our hearts; yet, because our
nature

nature is such that we cannot keep up that constant regard to him, in the whole of our conduct, which our own improvement and happiness require, without a free and familiar intercourse with him, such as we maintain with our earthly governors and parents (our attachment to whom is greatly strengthened by the genuine and natural expressions of it) he has been pleased not only to permit, but absolutely to require that intercourse; expecting that we should both make acknowledgments to him for favours already received, and also apply to him for those which we still want; not forgetting, however, to express the most intire acquiescence in his will, whether he should think proper to grant our requests or not. Now this is certainly the very part that a prudent and wise parent would take with a child, though, with respect to himself, both the acknowledgments and the requests of the child were ever so unnecessary.

In the Old Testament history, we find prayer to be the constant practice of all good men; and so far was there from being any doubt concerning the propriety of it, that it is mentioned by Eliphaz as the greatest aggravation of the wickedness which he ascribed to Job, that he even “cast off fear,
“ and

“and restrained prayer before God,” Job xv. 4. It is mentioned as the characteristic of God, that “he heareth prayer,” Ps. lxxv. 2, “O thou that hearest prayer, to thee “shall all flesh come.” Solomon also says, Prov. xv. 8, “That the prayer of the upright is his delight;” and David, Ps. cxlv. 18, “The Lord is nigh unto all them that “call upon him. He also will hear their “cry, and will save them.”

Our Saviour recommends frequent prayer to his disciples. He also gave them a variety of particular instructions, and was himself a pattern for them, with respect to it. For we not only read of his praying upon particular occasions (several of which prayers are recorded by the Evangelists) but it is said, upon one occasion, that he spent even a whole night in prayer to God, Luke vi. 12; as if he who received the most from God, and who was therefore the most dependent upon him, thought it necessary to be more particularly careful to express that dependence. Our Lord even encourages great earnestness and importunity in prayer; one of his parables being particularly calculated to excite men “always to “pray, and not to faint,” Luke xvii. 1, &c. “What man is there of you,” says he, addressing

addressing himself to a great multitude, Matt. vii. 9, &c. “whom, if his son ask
“bread, will he give him a stone, or if he
“ask a fish, will he give him a serpent. If
“ye then, being evil, know how to give
“good gifts unto your children, how much
“more shall your Father who is in hea-
“ven give good things to them that ask
“him.”

Our Lord is very careful, however, to inculcate a right disposition of mind in prayer, and particularly cautions his disciples to avoid the ostentation of the Pharisees, and the clamorous repetitions of the heathens upon that occasion, Matt. vi. 5, &c. “When thou prayest, thou shalt not
“be as the hypocrites are; for they love
“to pray standing in the synagogues, and
“and in the corners of the streets, that
“they may be seen of men. Verily I say
“unto you, they have their reward. But
“thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy
“closet, and when thou hast shut the
“door, pray to thy Father who is in
“secret, and thy Father who seeth in
“secret shall reward thee openly. But
“when ye pray use not vain repetitions, as
“the heathen do; for they think that they
“shall be heard for their much speaking.
“Be

“ Be not ye, therefore, like unto them for,
“ your father knoweth what things ye have
“ need of before ye ask him.” To these
excellent admonitions, he subjoins that pat-
tern of prayer which we usually call the
Lord’s prayer, which is admirably simple
and expressive; and as the most important
of all our petitions is that which we make
for the forgiveness of our sins, he is parti-
cularly careful to insist upon it, that we
make that request with a heart thoroughly
reconciled to all those who have offended
us. Matt. vi. 14, &c. “ For if ye forgive
“ men their trespasses, your heavenly Fa-
“ ther will also forgive you; but if ye for-
“ give not men their trespasses, neither will
“ your Father forgive your trespasses.”

The apostles also, upon a great variety
of occasions, most earnestly recommend
frequent prayer, 1 Thes. v. 17, “ Pray
“ without ceasing:” Rom. xii. 12, “ Re-
“ joicing in hope, patient in tribulation,
“ continuing instant in prayer:” Philip iv.
6, “ Be careful for nothing, but in every
“ thing, by prayer and supplication, with
“ thanksgiving, let your requests be made
“ known unto God:” 1 Tim. ii. 1, &c. “ I
“ exhort that supplications, prayers, inter-
“ cessions, and giving of thanks, be made
“ for

“ for all men ; for kings, and for all that
 “ are in authority.” This apostle does not
 fail, however, to recommend a proper temper
 of mind in prayer, when he adds, v. 8,
 “ I will that men pray every where, lifting
 “ up holy hands, without wrath, and doubt-
 “ ing.”

When persons are under affliction, they
 are more especially disposed to have recourse
 to prayer. Seeing no other hope, they fly
 to God, as their all-sufficient Saviour, and
 friend ; and this natural propensity of the
 the mind is particularly encouraged by the
 apostle James v. 13, “ Is any among you
 “ afflicted, let him pray.”

Though the greatest stress is laid, in the
 scriptures, upon *private* devotion, it is by
 no means so much so, as to set aside the
 obligation of *social worship*, which is also
 much insisted upon in them. The sacri-
 fices which were appointed to be made
 every morning and evening before the
 Jewish tabernacle or temple, were offered
 in the name of the whole nation ; and as
 many persons as conveniently could, did
 usually attend during the ceremony, and
 offered up their prayers, while the priest
 went into the temple to burn incense, Luke
 i. 10, “ And the whole multitude of the
 “ people

“ people were praying without at the time
“ of incense.” David expresses the high
satisfaction which he received from those
opportunities of public worship in several
of his psalms, as Ps. xxvi. 8, “ Lord, I
“ have loved the habitation of thy house,
“ and the place where thine honour dwell-
“ eth.” Ps. cxxii. 1, “ I was glad when
“ they said unto me, Let us go unto the
“ house of the Lord :” and Ps. lxxxiv. 1,
“ How amiable are thy tabernacles, O
“ Lord of hosts. A day in thy courts is
“ better than a thousand.” He also re-
commends the greatest reverence upon these
occasions, Ps. lxxxix. 7, “ God is greatly
“ to be feared in the assembly of the saints,
“ and to be had in reverence of all them
“ that are about him.”

Though we have no particular accounts
of the custom of the Jews, in ancient times,
with respect to the manner in which they
spent their sabbaths, yet since they were
commanded to rest from all labour on those
days, and were enjoined to read and me-
ditate on their law “ at all times,” Deut.
vi. 7. we cannot but suppose that they em-
ployed those days, in which they had most
leisure for that purpose, in reading, medi-
tation, and prayer; and several passages in
the

the Old Testament seem pretty plainly to allude to such a custom. We find, however, in the time of our Saviour, that *synagogues* were established through the whole country of Judea, and in all other countries where the Jews had any settlement; and in these places the books of the law and the prophets were regularly read, and prayers made every sabbath day. These services our Lord himself statedly attended, as Luke informs us, ch. iv. 16, “As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day.” And the same exercises were continued by the apostles in all christian churches, which were formed upon the same general plan, and have been transmitted through all ages to this day.

SECTION II.

Of the social duties.

IT would be tedious, and is by no means necessary, to go over all the articles of *social duty*, as they are explained and enforced in the scriptures. Whatever I have observed in the first part of these Institutes, as the dictate of nature, is strongly incul-

cated

cated in the books of the Old and New Testament, and recommended by motives and considerations peculiar to revelation. I must not omit, however, to observe that the prophets in the Old Testament, and our Saviour and the apostles in the New, do not content themselves with giving instructions concerning men's conduct in particular cases and instances, but are more especially careful to inculcate the necessity of cultivating such an *inward temper of mind* as will form a complete *character*, which will lead to the observance of every particular duty, and make the constant practice of it easy and delightful.

They more especially recommend the universal principle of *brotherly love*, and a constant attention to the interests of others. The second great commandment of the law, our Saviour says, is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and in this, as the apostle Paul observes, the whole of the moral law, as far as it relates to society, is comprehended, Rom. xiii. 8, &c. "Owe no man any thing but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not
" covet ;

“ covet ; and if there be any other com-
“ mandment, it is briefly comprehended in
“ this saying, viz. Thou shalt love thy
“ neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no
“ ill to his neighbour ; therefore love is the
“ fulfilling of the law.”

Our Lord and the apostles, besides this general good-will to all men, strongly recommend a more affectionate concern for our fellow-christians, those who have the same faith, and the same hope with ourselves, John xv. 12, “ This is my com-
“ mandment, that ye love one another, as
“ I have loved you ;” and, xiii. 35, “ By
“ this shall all men know that ye are my
“ disciples, if ye love one another.” According to the apostle Peter exhorts, 1 Peter i. 22, “ See that ye love one another with
“ a pure heart fervently.” The apostle John, more than any other, recommends this divine principle of brotherly love, and shews that it is impossible to love God without it. 1 John iv. 20, “ This com-
“ mandment have we from him, that he
“ who loveth God love his brother also :” v. 11, “ Beloved, if God so loved us, we
“ ought also to love one another. No man
“ hath seen God at any time. If we love
“ one another God dwelleth in us, and his
“ love

“ love is perfected in us :” v. 16, “ He
 “ that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God,
 “ and God in him :” ver. 20, “ If a man
 “ say, I love God, and hateth his brother,
 “ he is a liar ; for he that loveth not his
 “ brother, whom hath seen, how can he
 “ love God, whom he hath not seen ?”

Our Lord is particularly careful to warn
 his disciples, that they do not confine their
 attention to outward actions, but to consi-
 der the *inward temper of their mind*, with
 respect to every branch of social duty ; and
 he censures the narrowness of the Pharisaical
 morality for its deficiency in this respect,
 upon several occasions, and especially in his
 sermon upon the mount. Mat. v. 21,
 “ Ye have heard that it was said by them
 “ of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and who-
 “ soever shall kill shall be in danger of the
 “ judgment ; but I say unto you, that
 “ whosoever is angry with his brother
 “ without a cause, shall be in danger of the
 “ judgment :” ver. 27. “ Ye have heard
 “ that it was said by them of old time,
 “ Thou shalt not commit adultery ; but I
 “ say unto you, that whosoever looketh on
 “ a woman, to lust after her, hath com-
 “ mitted adultery with her already in his
 “ heart.”

Very

Very proper attention was also given to the temper of mind, and inclination of the heart, in the Old Testament; an instance of which we have in the tenth commandment. Ex. xx. 17, “Thou shalt not covet
 “thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man
 “servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox,
 “nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy
 “neighbour’s.”

Far from confining our good-will and kind offices to our particular friends and fellow-christians, our Lord strongly recommends good-will and kindness to all persons, and even to enemies: Mat. v. 43, &c.
 “Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou
 “shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine
 “enemy; but I say unto you, Love your
 “enemies, bless them that curse you, do
 “good to them that hate you, and pray
 “for them who despitefully use you and
 “persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven;
 “for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil
 “and on the good, and sendeth rain on the
 “just and on the unjust. For if ye love
 “them that love you, what reward have
 “ye? Do not even the publicans the same?
 “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father
 “ther

“ther who is in heaven is perfect.” The apostle Paul also enjoins us, Rom. xii. 17, &c. “to recompense to no man evil for evil, *and* not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.”

The *forgiveness of injuries*, about which the heathen moralists had, as we have seen, great doubts, and which some of them absolutely denied to be a duty; but which is certainly a most amiable and valuable one, is strongly recommended by our Lord and his apostles. Luke xvii. 3, &c. “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.” He also particularly inforces this advice by the consideration of the divine mercy and clemency. Mat. vi. 14, “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Luke vi. 36. “Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” To the same purpose the apostle Paul. Eph. iv. 31, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put
VOL. III. F “away

“ away from you, with all malice ; and be
 “ ye kind to one another, tender hearted,
 “ forgiving one another, even as God, in
 “ Christ, has forgiven you.” See also
 Col. iii. 12, 13.

As a most important branch of christian duty, and a proof of the most sincere brotherly love, we are frequently exhorted, in the scriptures, to consult one another’s improvement in virtue and goodness : Rom. xiv. 19, “ Let us follow after the things
 “ which make for peace, and things where-
 “ with one may edify another :” Heb. x. 24, “ Let us consider one another, to pro-
 “ voke unto love, and to good works.”—

It being our Lord’s chief object to inspire just dispositions of mind, and right principles of action, which shall supersede all nice distinctions about particular rules of conduct, by leading us to *feel* properly upon every occasion, he gives us this one rule, which in fact comprehends all the duties of social life : Mat. vii. 12, “ Whatsoever ye
 “ would that men should do unto you, do
 “ ye even so to them, for this is the law and
 “ the prophets.” An important example to this rule he also gives us with respect to candour in judging of one another. Mat. vii. 1, “ Judge not, that ye be not judged ;
 “ for

“ for with what judgment ye judge, ye
 “ shall be judged; and with what measure
 “ ye mete, it shall be measured to you
 “ again.”

It is not necessary to recite the precepts of scripture which relate to the universally acknowledged duties of *justice* or *equity*, which are very full and explicit; but I shall observe, that the obligation of *compassion* and *charity*, which is variable in itself, and which might be disputed and evaded by subtle cavillers, is frequently insisted upon both in the Old and New Testament. Some of the passages in which this duty is inculcated, are peculiarly affecting. Deut. xv. 7,
 “ If there be among you a poor man, one
 “ of thy brethren, within any of thy gates,
 “ in the land which the Lord thy God
 “ giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy
 “ heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor
 “ brother; but thou shalt open thy hand
 “ wide unto him, and shalt surely lend
 “ him sufficient for his need, in that which
 “ he wanteth.” Lev. xix. 9, “ And when
 “ ye reap the harvest of your land, thou
 “ shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy
 “ field, neither shalt thou gather the glean-
 “ ings of thy harvest; and thou shalt not
 “ glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou
 F 2 “ gather

“gather every grape of thy vineyard : thou
 “shalt leave them for the poor and
 “stranger, I am the Lord your God.” Isa.
 lviii. 6, &c. “Is not this the fast that I
 “have chosen—to undo the heavy bur-
 “dens, and to let the oppressed go free;
 “and that ye break every yoke? Is it not
 “to deal thy bread to the hungry, and
 “that thou bring the poor that are cast out
 “to thy house; when thou seest the naked
 “that thou cover him, and that thou hide
 “not thyself from thine own flesh? Then
 “shalt thy light break forth as the
 “morning, &c.” Ps. xli. 1, “Blessed is
 “he that considereth the poor, the Lord
 “will deliver him in time of trouble.”

Our Saviour is far from being forgetful
 of a duty, which has so near a relation to
 that affectionate sympathy and brotherly
 love, which enters so much into the spirit
 of his gospel. Upon occasion of the rich
 making feasts for the entertainment of
 others, as rich as themselves, he says,
 Luke xiv. 13, “When thou makest a feast,
 “call the poor, the maimed, the lame,
 “the blind, and thou shalt be blessed;
 “for they cannot recompence thee, for
 “thou shalt be recompenced at the resur-
 “rection of the just.” The apostle James,

whose whole epistle is a recommendation of good works, does not omit this duty : James ii. 15, “ If a brother or sister be
 “ naked, and destitute of daily food, and
 “ one of you say unto them, Depart in
 “ peace, be ye warmed and filled ; not-
 “ withstanding ye give them not those
 “ things which are needful to the body ;
 “ what doth it profit ?” And the apostle John, whose temper seems to have been peculiarly benevolent, says, 1 John iii. 17,
 “ Whofo hath this world’s good, and seeth
 “ his brother have need, and shutteth up
 “ his bowels of compassion from him, how
 “ dwelleth the love of God in him ?”

The obligation of *veracity* seems to have been but weak in the heathen world, and therefore the apostles are careful to caution their christian converts very particularly on this head. Eph. iv. 25, “ Wherefore,
 “ putting away lying, speak every man
 “ truth with his neighbour, for we are
 “ members one of another :” ch. iv. 15,
 “ Speaking the truth in love.” Col. iii. 9, “ Lie not one to another, seeing that you
 “ have put off the old man with his
 “ deeds.”

Lastly, the most explicit rules are laid down for our conduct with respect to the

various *relative duties of life*, as those of husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, magistrate and subject, minister and people; recommending, in general, to superiors, a regard to equity, and an affectionate attention to the interest of those who are under their power; and to inferiors a reasonable submission, and a faithful attachment to those to whom they are subject; but a detail of all the particulars is not necessary in this place. See 1 Pet. ii. 13, to the end, iii. 1—7. Eph. v. 22, to the end, vi. 1—9. Coll. iii. 18. to the end, iv. 1, &c.

S E C T I O N III.

Of the duties which respect ourselves.

WHEREAS very little account was made by the heathens of the duties of temperance and chastity, and in general of those duties which respect a man's government of himself, in cases where others are not immediately concerned, we find that

that these duties make a considerable figure in the system of the revealed will of God, and that the utmost *purity of heart*, as well as of life and conversation, is required of us in these respects. More especially as the gentile converts had not been used to put any restraint upon their private passions, from a principle of conscience, the apostles, in writing to them, are particularly careful to enforce a regard to these virtues.

“Blessed,” says our Saviour, Mat. v. 8, “are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” The apostle Paul cautions Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 22, “to flee youthful lusts, *and* to keep himself pure,” 1 Tim. v. 22 : and, writing to the Thessalonians, he says, 1 Thess. iv. 4, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” To the Ephesians, ch. v. 3, “Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becometh saints ; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient :” and, lastly, he gives the Corinthians a most solemn warning concerning the extreme danger of an addictedness to these, as well as other vices. 1 Cor. vi. 9, “Be not de-

“ceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,—nor covetous, nor drunkards,—shall inherit the kingdom of God:” and, whatever some modern libertines may plead in favour of what they call *gallantry*, the apostle peremptorily says, Heb. xiii. 4, that “Whoremongers, and adulterers, God will judge.” Nor is this doctrine, as some have pretended, peculiar to the apostles, as if they had made the doctrines of the gospel more rigorous than their master; for our Lord himself enumerates *fornication* along with *murders, adulteries, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies*, which come from the heart, and defile the man, Mat. xv. 19.

Every other irregularity of passion, besides the irregular indulgence of the bodily appetites, is also expressly forbidden in the scriptures, and a variety of virtues, dispositions, and habits, which have their seat more properly in the *mind*, are strongly inculcated upon us, as *humility, meekness, contentment, and diligence*.

Admonitions respecting *pride*, or too high an opinion of ourselves, and the consequence of it, arrogance with respect to others, are very frequent both in the Old and

and New Testament. To assist us to repress this improper disposition of mind, which is the source of so much uneasiness, both to ourselves and others, we are more especially reminded, that every advantage of which we can be possessed, and which can be the foundation of pride, as birth, riches, power, knowledge, &c. is the gift of God, and therefore should be enjoyed with gratitude, humility, and usefulness.

Moses admonishes the Israelites on this subject: Deut. viii. 2, &c. "When thou
"hast eaten and art full, and hast built
"goodly houses, and when thy herds and
"thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and
"good is multiplied, beware that thou for-
"get not the Lord thy God, and thy heart
"be lifted up; and thou say in thine
"heart, My power, and the might of my
"hand, has gotten me this wealth."

Our Saviour took every opportunity of inculcating this useful lesson on his disciples. He began his sermon on the mount with pronouncing a blessing upon the "poor
"in spirit," Mat. v. 2. He frequently reproved the pride of the Scribes and Pharisees, Mat. xxiii. 2—6; and recommended humility and moderation to his apostles, upon several occasions, and more especially

when they disputed among themselves who should be the greatest in his kingdom ; and he sets before them his own example in this respect. Mat. xi. 29, “ Learn of me, for
 “ I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye
 “ shall find rest for your souls.”

The apostles give many excellent advices on this subject, as Rom. xii. 3, “ I say,
 “ through the grace given unto me, to
 “ every man that is among you, not to
 “ think of himself more highly than he
 “ ought to think, but to think soberly,
 “ according as God has dealt to every man
 “ the measure of faith.” The same apostle argues this matter more particularly in 1 Cor. iv. 6, &c. “ That no one of you be
 “ puffed up one against another ; for who
 “ maketh thee to differ from another,
 “ and what hast thou that thou didst not receive. Now if thou didst receive it, why
 “ dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ?” He repeats the same exhortation, 1 Tim. vi. 17, “ Charge them that
 “ are rich in this world, that they be not
 “ high-minded, nor trust in uncertain
 “ riches, but in the living God, who giveth
 “ us richly all things to enjoy ; that they
 “ do good, that they be rich in good
 “ works, ready to distribute, willing to
 “ com-

“ communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come.” The apostle James also gives us this general maxim to the same purpose, James iv. 6. “ God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.”

Hasty and unreasonable resentment is also the subject of frequent caution and advice in the books of scripture, Solomon says, Prov. xvi. 32, and xxv. 28, “ He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city. He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city broken down, and without walls.” David says, Ps. xxxvii. 8, “ Cease from anger, and forsake wrath : fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.” Our Lord pronounces a blessing upon the *meek*, Mat. v. 5; and he represents being *angry without a cause* as a thing of a very criminal nature. The apostle Paul exhorts, Phil. iv. 5, that our “ moderation,” in this respect, “ be known unto all men, because the Lord is at hand :” and lastly, *peaceableness, gentleness, and meekness*, are enumerated by St. Paul among the *fruits of the spirit*, while *hatred, wrath, and strife*, are reckoned among the fruits of the flesh, Gal. v. 20.

With respect to the things of this world, and our condition in it, *industry*, but without *anxiety*, is every where recommended to us. More especially, idleness is often finely exposed, and diligence praised in the book of Proverbs, ch. vi. 6, “Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise.” xviii. 9, “He that is slothful is brother to him that is a great waster.” vi. 9, “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard, when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.” The apostle Paul, among other advices to the christian converts, exhorts them, Rom. xii. 10, not to be slothful in business; and he himself was an example of industry, working with his own hands, at his trade of a tent-maker, rather than be burdensome to the Corinthians, with whom he resided.

On the other hand, we are perhaps more frequently cautioned against excessive *anxiety* about the the things of this life; and mankind in general, perhaps, suffer more in consequence of it. Envy, which takes its rise from anxiety, is particularly for-

forbidden in the tenth commandment. Solomon says, Prov. xxviii. 20, that "he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent;" and Agur is represented as making this excellent prayer, Ps. xxxix. 8, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord; or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Our Lord advises his disciples, Luke xii. 15, "to take heed and beware of covetousness, for that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth;" and again, xxi. 34, "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness," and "cares of this life;" and he advises us to lay up "treasure in heaven, rather than upon earth," Matt. vi. 19. The apostle Paul has many earnest exhortations upon this subject. Heb. xiii. 5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have." 1 Tim. vi. 6, "Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out, and having food and raiment let us be there-

“ therewith content ; but they that will be
 “ rich fall into temptation, and a snare,
 “ and into many foolish and hurtful lusts,
 “ which drown men in destruction and per-
 “ dition ; for the love of money is the
 “ root of all evil, &c.” Lastly, he gives
 a beautiful description of the temper of his
 own mind in this respect, Phil. iv. 11, “ I
 “ have learned in whatsoever state I am,
 “ therewith to be content. I know how
 “ both to be abased, and I know how to
 “ abound. Every where, and in all things,
 “ I am instructed, both to be full, and to
 “ be hungry, both to abound, and to suf-
 “ fer need.”

It may seem extraordinary to some per-
 sons, that nothing should be said in the scrip-
 tures about the criminality of what we
 usually call *self-murder* ; but since all those
wrong dispositions of mind, which lead to it,
 are sufficiently censured, there was no great
 reason for noticing this particular action,
 which takes its rise and its character from
 them.

The voluntary death of Achitophel, and
 indeed of Sampson, in the Old Testament,
 and that of Judas Iscariot in the New, are
 mentioned in the course of the history, to-
 gether with the circumstances which led to
 them,

them, but without any particular censure ; and Sampson was even assisted supernaturally to put an end to his own life, together with that of his enemies.

Josephus, in the speech which he made, to dissuade his countrymen from laying violent hands upon themselves (which great numbers of the Jews about that time did) *De Bello Judaico*, lib. iii. cap. 7, makes not use of one argument drawn from the scriptures, but only from reason, or the principles of the heathen philosophy ; speaking of the separate state of the soul, of transmigration, and of Tartarus.

It seems to be sufficient to say, that there is no example in the scriptures of any person of distinguished virtue putting an end to his own life, and that a voluntary death is never mentioned with approbation ; and the most eminent personages, especially Jesus Christ, are recorded to have borne pain and torture to the last, without ever thinking of relieving themselves by a voluntary death. We also know that none of the apostles, or primitive christians, ever took this method to avoid torture, even when they could have no hope of life ; and we cannot but feel that we should have thought meanly of them if they had done so ; thinking

ing such a degree of impatience and cowardice, as that conduct would have argued, a considerable flaw in their characters.

I do not see much force in the argument against a voluntary death from the consideration of life being the *gift of God*, and *a trust*, which we ought not to resign without his orders, because every blessing of life comes under the same description, and yet many of these we think ourselves sufficiently authorised to relinquish, according to our own prudence and discretion. But to throw away *life* is, in another view, a very different thing from relinquishing wealth, rank, or ease, &c. for it is putting an end to the whole period of trial and discipline, and throwing away the opportunity which adversity, as a part of it, might afford, to improve us, and fit us for something greater hereafter; and, with respect to other persons, there certainly is not a nobler, or more improving spectacle in the world, than that of a good man struggling with undeserved sufferings, without a complaint.

But though, on these accounts, I should, in all cases, condemn a man for withdrawing himself from the public theatre of life,
I would

I would not bring this action under the denomination of *murder*, because they are by no means things of the same nature; for, certainly, the temper of mind with which a man destroys himself, and that with which he kills another, are very different, and the latter is much more malignant, and deserving of punishment than the former. *Despair*, or *fear*, are reprehensible; but *malice* is certainly of a much more atrocious nature.

Neither can there be any thing peculiarly hazardous in suicide, considered as the *last* crime of which a man is guilty, and of which he has no opportunity of repenting, because it is not any single action, the first, the middle, or the last of a man's life, that ought, in equity, to determine his character in a future state, but the *whole of his character and conduct*, taken together.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

Of the means of virtue.

THE sacred writings not only contain the most powerful dissuatives from all kinds of vice, and the most effectual exhortations to a life of universal virtue, but likewise a variety of observations and advices relating to the manner in which virtues or virtuous habits are formed, and the methods by which inordinate affections may be repressed, and proper ones promoted.

For this purpose, they propose constant watchfulness, frequent meditation on the works and word of God, a careful choice of good company, and great resolution and self-denial, whenever bad habits are become predominant. They moreover advise all persons to watch over one another, and to do every thing to mutual edification.

David says, Ps. cxli. 3, "Set a watch,
" O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door
" of

“ of my lips.” Our Lord advises his disciples, Matt. xxvi. 41, “ To watch and
 “ pray, that they enter not into tempta-
 “ tion ;” and, Mark. iv. 18, “ To take
 “ heed, lest when they hear the word, the
 “ cares of this world, and the deceitful-
 “ nefs of riches, and the lust of other
 “ things, entering in, choke the word, and
 “ make it become unfruitful :” and he
 charges the church at Sardis, Rev. iii.
 2, “ to be watchful, and strengthen the
 “ things that remain, that are ready to
 “ die.” Exhortations of a similar nature
 abound in the apostolical writings.

More especially are the *books of scripture*
 recommended to our use, as containing the
 best instructions for a good life; and being a
 history of the divine proceedings, respecting
 the human race, they necessarily exhibit
 such views as cannot but make an im-
 pression, in the highest degree, favourable
 to virtue. Moses repeatedly charges the
 Israelites to read and meditate upon his
 laws and writings, Deut. vi. 6, “ These
 “ words which I command thee this day
 “ shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt
 “ teach them diligently unto thy chil-
 “ dren, and shalt talk of them when thou
 “ sittest in thine house, and when thou
 “ walkest

“ walkest by the way, and when thou liest
 “ down, and when thou risest up.” The
 same injunction he repeats, Deut. xi. 18.
 The kings of Israel were moreover required
 to write out a copy of the law with their
 own hands, Deut. xvii. 18, “ And it shall
 “ be when he sitteth upon the throne of
 “ his kingdom, that he shall write him a
 “ copy of this law in a book, out of that
 “ which is before the priests, the Levites.
 “ And it shall be with him, and he shall
 “ read therein all the days of his life; that
 “ he may learn to fear the Lord his God,
 “ to keep all the words of this law, and
 “ these statutes, to do them, &c.” David
 says of a good man, Ps. i. 2, That “ his
 “ delight is in the law of the Lord, and in
 “ his law doth he meditate day and night ;”
 and, Ps. xxxvii. 31, “ The law of the Lord
 “ is in his heart, none of his steps shall
 “ slide.” Lastly, the apostle Paul com-
 mends the parents of Timothy, and men-
 tions it as a great advantage to him, 2
 Tim. iii. 15, that, “ from a child he had
 “ known the holy scriptures, which, he
 “ says, were able to make him wise unto
 “ salvation, through faith which is in
 “ Christ Jesus.” Concerning the same
 scriptures he adds, that they are “ profit-
 able

“able for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Solomon repeatedly admonishes young persons concerning the danger of *bad company*. Prov. i. 10, “My son, if sinners intice thee, consent thou not;” v. 15, “Walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path.” And he observes in general, Prov. xiii. 20, that, he “that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but that a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” The apostle Paul also cautions the Corinthians on this head, when he says, 1 Cor. xv. 33, “Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners.”

The practice of our duty is in general represented in the scriptures as *pleasant* and easy, when we are accustomed to it. Thus Solomon says, of wisdom, Prov. iii. 17, that “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;” and David says, Ps. cxix. 165, “Great peace have they who love thy law,” and “nothing shall offend them.” Our Saviour also says, Matt. xi. 29, “Take my yoke upon
“you,

“ you, and learn of me ; for I am meek
“ and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest
“ unto your souls. For my yoke is easy,
“ and my burden is light.”

But, notwithstanding this, we are warned, agreeably to what reason and nature would apprize us of, that before vicious habits are subdued, and virtuous ones formed, great exertions of courage and resolution will be necessary ; and the difficulty, in this case, is by no means concealed by the writers of the Old and New Testament, especially the latter, who generally wrote in times of persecution. Their writings, accordingly, abound with exhortations to exert proportionable courage and fortitude.

Our Lord expresses the difficulty of conquering a propensity to certain vices, by a very strong figure, when he says, Matt. v. 29, “ If thy right eye offend thee, pluck
“ it out, and cast it from thee, &c.” He also gives us an idea of the great hardships which may attend the profession of christianity, when he says, Luke ix. 23, “ If
“ any man will come after me ; let him
“ deny himself, and take up his cross, and
“ follow me, &c.” Accordingly, we are exhorted by the apostle Paul, Col. iii. 5,
To

To “mortify our members which are of
“the earth,” and, Rom. xii. 2, “not to
“be conformed to this world, but to be
“transformed by the renewing of our
“mind.” We shall find, however, that the
scriptures propose to us rewards and en-
couragements abundantly adequate to the
labour and difficulties of which they ap-
prize us.

Lastly, we are most earnestly exhorted
to watch over one another, and to promote
our mutual edification by every proper
means. Moses says, Lev. xix. 17, “Thou
“shalt, in any wise, rebuke thy neigh-
“bour,” and “not suffer sin upon him.”
The book of Proverbs contains excellent
observations concerning the benefit of in-
struction and reproof. Prov. xxviii. 23,
“He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall
“find more favour than he that flattereth
“with the tongue;” and David says, Ps.
cxli. 5, “Let the righteous smite me, ~~it~~
“shall be a kindness, and let him reprove
“me, it shall be an excellent oil.” The
author of the Epistle to the Hebrews en-
joins, Heb. iii. 13, that we “exhort one
“another daily, while it is called to-day,
“lest any of us be hardened through the
“de-

“deceitfulness of sin.” We are, in many places, cautioned to *give no offence*, that is to cause none to offend, by any improper liberty of ours. The apostle Paul enlarges much upon this subject, 1 Cor. x. Lastly, the apostle James speaks in the highest terms of the man who contributes to the spiritual benefit of another, James v. 19, “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

SECTION V.

General remarks concerning morality.

I Shall close this account of *the morality of the Bible*, with some observations of a more general nature.

It is unquestionably a just maxim in itself, and a clear doctrine of the scriptures, that no *partial obedience* to the law of God

God will be accepted, instead of *universal obedience* which is absolutely required of us. A just respect to the authority of God, as our sovereign, lawgiver, and judge, will certainly lead us, as it did the Psalmist, Ps. cxix. 5, "to have respect to all his commandments," and not to admit of some, and refuse others, as we shall judge it reasonable and expedient, or, which is generally the same thing, as we shall find it *convenient* to us. Such a conduct would not be excused by any earthly sovereign, master, or parent; nor can it be expected to be so by the supreme Lord and judge of all.

The apostle James argues this case more particularly, James ii. 10, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all; for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

We are by no means, however, to infer from this, that all crimes and neglects are equal, and will be punished with equal severity; for it is the doctrine of the scriptures, as well as of reason, that there is a difference in offences, and some are spoken

of with much more indignation than others; in the same manner as more stress is laid upon some virtues than others. Undoubtedly, therefore, a difference will be made between even wilful offences of any kind, and universal profligacy of character and conduct. If a state of perfectly exact retribution be naturally impossible, we may, however, conclude that the future life there will be a near approach to it; and that the proper *reward of christians* will be assigned to those only who sincerely endeavour to do the whole will of God, without distinction or reserve.

For the same reason, no bounds are set to our attainments in virtue, but we are required to aim at the highest degrees of perfection, “to cleanse ourselves from all
“filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God;” 2 Cor. vii. 1, “to stand perfect and complete in
“all the will of God;” Col. iv. 12, “to
“abstain from all appearance of evil,” 1 Thess. v. 22; and to propose to ourselves the imitation of the all-perfect God himself. This was expressly inculcated by our Saviour, Mat. v. 28, “Be ye perfect, even
“as your Father who is in heaven is perfect;” by the apostle Paul, Eph. v. 1, “Be ye followers of God, as dear chil-
“dren;”

“dren;” and the apostle Peter, 1 Pct. i. 15, “As he that has called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation; for it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy,” referring to Lev. xi. 2, xix. 2, xx. 7.

These precepts appear, at first view, to be very strict, and, considering the imperfection of human nature, to be unreasonably severe; but considering that, in all cases, sufficient allowance is made for every natural defect, for whatever is consistent with a sincere endeavour to do the whole will of God, there is the greatest wisdom and propriety in these exhortations.

Had any particular pitch of virtue been defined, upon our arrival at which we had been encouraged to be satisfied with ourselves, without attempting any thing farther; many persons, abounding in conceit and presumption only, would soon have arrogated to themselves that character, and have been dupes to the most fatal delusion and self-deceit. We even see that absolute perfection has been pretended to by many.

Besides, since moral character is a thing which, in its own nature, admits of no precise boundary, but advances, by insensible degrees, from the most extreme profligacy, to such purity and excellence as only the di-

vine Being himself is capable of; and since it is essential to a genuine good disposition to wish the attainment of the greatest degrees of excellence, there would have been an impropriety in moral precepts of any other kind. The man whose chief study it is to recommend himself to God, by a conformity to his whole will, cannot but be sensible, that whatever his attainments are, or may be, there will still be something more that he *might*, and *ought* to have done; his moral discernment being improved by the greater attention which he will continually give to his character and conduct.

Indeed, this is the case with all inferior arts of various kinds, as well as this great *art of life*. What poet or painter ever thought his piece absolutely faultless and perfect, with whatever admiration it might be considered by others: and could he remove all the blemishes he now sees in it, he would still, by more attention to it, discover more. Now, for the same reason, this must necessarily be the case with every man whose object is to excel in virtue, and who studies propriety and perfection of moral character.

The apostle Paul discovers this just discernment in his own case, Phil. iii. 13,
“ Brethren,

“ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” He, and other apostles, give many excellent precepts to this purpose, to those christians to whom they wrote. 2 Pet. i. 5, “ And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity ; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is agreeable to the same general maxim, that *perseverance till death* is absolutely required of all who expect the rewards of the gospel ; and a backslider, at any period, is always represented as even in a worse condition than one who had never known the right way ; since the knowledge he had of

the excellence of it ought to have been an additional motive with him to continue in it.

To this purpose the divine Being addressees the children of Israel by Ezekiel, ch. xviii. 24, "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and commiteth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned. In his trespasss that he has trespassed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die." It is also our Saviour's doctrine, John viii. 31, "That if we continue in his word, then are we his disciples indeed." The aggravation of apostacy is particularly pointed out by the apostle Peter, 2 Pet. ii. 20, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way to righteousness, than after they had known it to turn from the the holy commandment delivered unto them."

On this account the apostles urge their fellow-christians to constancy in the profession of the gospel, viz. lest they should lose their reward, and enhance their future condemnation. Gal. vi. 9, "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap." 2 John viii, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

It was the great maxim of the heathen philosophers of old, as it is with almost all those who reject christianity at present, to *think with the wise, and act with the vulgar*; but a perfect consistency of character and profession is strictly required of christians. In time of persecution we are allowed, and even commanded, to endeavour to avoid it, by all fair and honest methods; so that if we be persecuted in one city, we may flee to another; but on no consideration whatever are we to *make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience*, by denying or concealing our christian profession. With respect to this great hour of trial, the declarations of our Lord are most express and solemn.

Having foretold his own sufferings, and severely rebuked Peter, who could not bear the thought of them, we are told, Mark

viii. 34, that "he called the people unto him, with his disciples, and said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life, for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." Mat. x. 32, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven."

These admonitions the apostles keep in mind in their writings, and therefore the apostle Paul says, 2 Tim. ii. 12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he also will deny us." And, acting upon this maxim, thousands of christians have chearfully laid down their lives for the profession of the christian faith.

It is to be observed, that, in the scriptures, though the rewards of virtue are only promised to persons of a truly virtuous character and conduct, they are promised to those who shall so repent of their sins, as to manifest a change of character and conduct at any time of the active

part

part of their lives. No person, however, has any encouragement from any part of scripture, to expect that he shall be entitled to the rewards of the gospel, who repents so late, that he has no opportunity of shewing a change of conduct at all.

Besides, few of those late professions of repentance are sincere, or, if sincere, would have been lasting; and according to the uniform language of the scriptures, it is “according to the deeds that men have actually done in this life,” that they shall receive at the hand of God hereafter. 2 Cor. v. 10, “for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which he has done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”

It is alleged, indeed, that our Saviour promised the thief upon the cross, that he should be with him in paradise; but nothing can be inferred from a case so very obscure as this is. For we know nothing of the previous character of this man, we can guess but very imperfectly at what is meant by his request, nor do we know precisely the full import of what our Lord did promise him.

him. Besides, this story is only found in *one* of the evangelists, viz. Luke, who appears, by many circumstances, to have been the least informed of any of them; and Matthew, who was upon the spot, says that *both the thieves* reviled Christ, without adding one word in favour of either of them. As therefore there is no other fact in the history of the Old or New Testament, that gives any countenance to expectations of mercy in a proper *death-bed repentance*, and all the general rules and precepts of the scripture absolutely exclude all hope in this case, it must be very dangerous to rely upon it; though it is to be feared that many persons continue to live in a manner which their conscience disapproves, in consequence of deluding themselves with this miserable fallacy.

I shall conclude this account of the morality of the scriptures, with observing, that it is not delivered systematically, and at large, either in the Old or New Testament; but that it is not on this account the *less*, but, in fact, the *more valuable*, because it is delivered in a manner that is both more *intelligible*, and more *forcible*. For being delivered as particular occasions suggest, it has necessarily the advantage of a peculiar emphasis

phasis and energy. What precept, for instance, against pride or hypocrisy, in a general system of morals, would have had the force of our Lord's vehement reflections upon the Scribes and Pharisees, and of his affectionate admonitions to his own disciples on those subjects; or what other manner of instruction would have recommended a great variety of amiable virtues so much as our Lord's method of inculcating them by *example* and pertinent *parables*.

Besides, what men really want, is not so much to know what is their duty, as proper views and motives to induce them to practise it. It is, therefore, in general, very properly taken for granted, in the scriptures, that men know what it is that God requires of them, and almost all the admonitions to virtue go upon that supposition, enforcing the practice of what is acknowledged to be right, by motives adapted to peculiar situations and circumstances.

SECTION VI.

Of positive institutions.

BESIDE the duties of strictly *moral obligation*, on the observance of which our moral character, and happiness, chiefly depend; we find, in revelation, that the divine Being has been pleased to enjoin several observances, which are not in themselves of a moral nature, but which ultimately tend to promote good morals, and that just state of mind, which makes the practice of our duty in other respects easy to us. These are the observance of one day in seven the purpose of rest from labour, which is obligatory on all mankind; the observance of a large ritual of ceremonies by the Jews, and of baptism and the Lord's supper by the Christians. Of each of these, in the order of which I have now mentioned them, I shall give a general account, with a view to explain the nature and use of them.

§ 1. *Of the observance of the sabbath.*

WE are expressly told, in the books of Moses, that the observance of the *sabbath*, or of rest from labour every seventh day, was appointed in commemoration of the day on which God rested from the creation of the heavens and the earth, which was completed in six days. This injunction being laid upon Adam, necessarily affects all his posterity. Gen. ii. 2, “ And on the seventh day God ended his work “ which he had made, and he rested on the “ seventh day from all his work which he “ had made; and God blessed the seventh “ day, and sanctified it, because that in it “ he had rested from all his work, which “ God created and made.” But we have a more particular account of the rest to be observed on this day, in the fourth commandment, Ex. xx. 8, “ Remember the “ sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days “ shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; “ but the seventh day is the sabbath of the “ Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do “ any

“ any work, thou, nor the son, nor thy
 “ daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid
 “ servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger
 “ that is within thy gates. For in six days
 “ the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea,
 “ and all that in them is, and rested the
 “ seventh day : wherefore the Lord blessed
 “ the seventh day, and hallowed it.”

Besides this reason for keeping the sabbath, which equally affects all mankind, we sometimes find other arguments insisted upon, which respect the Jews only, as Deut. v. 15, “ Remember that thou wast
 “ a servant in the land of Egypt, and that
 “ the Lord thy God brought thee out
 “ thence, through a mighty hand, and by
 “ a stretched out arm, therefore the Lord
 “ thy God commanded thee to keep the
 “ sabbath day.” It appears from these passages, that the proper purpose of the sabbath is *rest from bodily labour*. But, on this account, it is also peculiarly seasonable for serious reflection of mind, and devout meditation on the works of God, and that by this means it is exceedingly useful for correcting the unfavourable influence, which a close and uninterrupted attention to the business of this life naturally has upon our minds ; impressing us with just sentiments,

and

and thereby preparing us for good conduct in life. Accordingly we find in the Old; but more especially in the New Testament, that this use was made of the sabbath, both by the Jews and Christians, there being stated assemblies on this day for reading the scriptures and public prayer.

The sabbath was also distinguished under the law of Moses by an additional sacrifice of two lambs, besides the daily burnt-offering, Num. xxviii. 9; and the ninety-second Psalm being intituled, "a Psalm or song for the sabbath day," was probably composed, in order to be sung in the temple-service of that day.

As we find 2 Kings iv. 23, that it was customary with the Jews of old to resort to their prophets on the sabbath day, and also on the new moons, it is not improbable but that the prophets, and other persons learned in their law, were used to explain it on those days to the people. Where no such persons were at hand, it is probable that masters of private families read the scriptures in their own houses; or several families might join, and assemble together for the purpose, and this might give occasion to the institution of *synagogues*, which answered the same end. These assemblies were

were in universal use in our Saviour's time, and had been so, as is generally agreed, from the time of Ezra, if they were not as old as the time of king David, who is thought to allude to them in some of his Psalms.

Christ having risen from the dead on the first day of the week which is distinguished by the appellation of *the Lord's day*, and having afterwards appeared to his disciples on that day, in preference to any other, it seems from thence to have grown into a custom, with the apostles and primitive christians, to assemble for public worship on that day, rather than on the seventh; and though the christian Jews probably continued for some time to meet on the seventh day also, yet, by degrees, the observance of that day for the purpose of public worship grew out of use.

Our present practice was certainly that of the earliest christians, whose customs we are able to trace, and there having never been any controversy upon the subject, we may safely conclude, that they derived it from the apostles; and their authority is sufficient for us. Nor does it make any material difference whether we be certified of their practice by their own writings, or
any

any other sufficient evidence. In fact, it does not seem to be very material, what particular day of the week we set apart for rest and public worship, provided we conscientiously appropriate the same portion of our time to that use.

That some portion of time should be set apart for the purpose of public worship seems to be highly reasonable of itself, exclusive of all express authority; since societies, as such, depend upon God, as well as the individuals that compose them; and therefore they owe him the same homage; and it is most natural that public thanksgivings, confessions, and petitions, should be made by as many of the society as can conveniently assemble for that purpose. Every person, therefore, who considers himself as a member of society, and having a common interest with it, should, on this account, attend the public worship of God; and what time is so convenient for this purpose, as the day of rest from labour and worldly business. The mind will naturally be most composed, and, on every account, the fittest for religious exercises on that day; and the devotion of individuals is greatly strengthened by the example of others joining with them.

It is an additional argument in favour of public worship, that the custom promotes society and friendship, by affording a frequent opportunity for the people of a neighbourhood meeting and seeing one another, especially as the business of the day tends to promote mutual love, and all the social virtues.

The sabbath, among the Jews, (and, for the same reason, it should apply to the Lord's day among the Christians) is expressly ordered, to be a day of rest for the *cattle*, as well as for man. It must be exceedingly wrong, therefore, to make the labouring cattle work on that day; and in this view it is a most reasonable and merciful institution.

As the most important use of a weekly day of rest, on which the attention of the mind is withdrawn from the usual cares of life, is serious and useful reflection, in order to the moral culture of the mind, it must be wrong, as evidently interfering with this end of the institution, to give way to excessive levity, and especially to use noisy and riotous diversions on that day; though a chearful, rather than an austere manner of spending it, is favourable to its proper use. Our Saviour was far from approving of the rigorous

ous and superstitious manner in which the Pharisees spent their sabbath, and we cannot think that more gloom and rigour becomes the christian than the Jewish institution. Since all positive ordinances are in their own nature subordinate to duties of moral obligation, it is evident that the rest of the sabbath should give place to labour, when acts of justice, benevolence, and mercy, must otherwise be neglected.

§ 2. *Of sacrifices.*

BEFORE I proceed any farther in my account of those scripture precepts, which are not properly of a moral nature, but are subservient to moral purposes, I shall treat briefly of *sacrifices*. Of the *origin* of sacrifices, consisting either of the presentation of fruits, or the killing and burning of animals, we have no account; but we find that they were permitted, and even expressly appointed by God, on a great variety of occasions.

If, as it is possible, sacrifices were not originally of divine appointment, we may suppose

suppose that the natural foundation, or original of them, was the same, in general, with that of prayer, viz. a method which mankind thought of, to express the sense they had of their gratitude and obligation to God for the gifts and protection of his providence, and to procure farther favours from him; and no kind of action was so proper for this purpose as the devoting to him some part of their substance, and especially such articles as contributed to their daily support.

It is to this day a custom throughout the East, never to approach any superior, or patron, without a present. And, in this case, the value of the present is not so much considered, as its being a token of respect and homage. Thus we read that when a Persian peasant was surprised by the approach of his prince, so that he had nothing at hand to present to him, he ran and fetched a handful of water from a neighbouring brook, rather than accost him without any offering. It is probable that, in conformity to these general ideas, which are still prevalent in the East, the Israelites were forbidden *to appear before the Lord empty*.

When mankind first thought of giving any thing to God, they would probably, at
first

first, only leave it in some open place, and abstain from making any farther use of it themselves; but afterwards, observing many things wasted away, or consumed by the the heat of the sun, which is the great visible agent of God in this world, and other things suddenly consumed by lightning, which was always considered as more immediately sent by God; they might naturally enough fall into the notion, that *consumption by fire* was the manner in which God took things. They might therefore imagine that burning things, at the same time that it most effectually alienated them from the use of man, would likewise be the most proper and the most decent method of devoting them to God; especially as nothing was left to putrefy, and become offensive after burning; and in some cases, as in the burning of incense, little or nothing would remain afterwards.

Considering the very low conceptions which mankind in early ages had of God, we do not wonder to find that they considered him as, in some manner, partaking with them of their sacrifices, and therefore that they considered them more especially as an expression of *reconciliation and friendship*; which idea is naturally, and especially
in

in the East, connected with that of eating and drinking together, and particularly eating the same salt. In this view it is observable that no sacrifice among the Jews was to be made without this ingredient.

This account of sacrifices is, in some measure, illustrated and confirmed by the history of the Greeks and Romans, whose sacrifices, originally, consisted of such things only as were their customary food. Thus it is acknowledged that all their sacrifices were at first *bloodless*, consisting of vegetables only? and that this practice continued till they themselves procured a sufficiency of animal food, upon which they began to sacrifice animals. The Greeks also expressly speak of *temples* as the houses of their gods, of *altars* as their tables, and of *priests* as their servants.

The same general ideas we find among the Jews, and the divine Being plainly alludes to them when he is represented as saying, Ps. l. "Shall I eat the flesh of bulls, " or drink the blood of goats?" which reproof was not intended to censure or change the general idea which they had annexed to sacrifices (as a transferring of their substance from themselves to God) but to restrain the very gross ideas which some of them

them might have entertained in pursuance of it, to prevent their laying too much stress upon these ceremonies, and to remind them of the greater importance of things of a moral nature, as being infinitely more pleasing to God.

There was not, originally, any particular order of men employed in the business of sacrifices, but every man sacrificed, as well as prayed, in person, being priest as well as king in his own family; and in those primitive patriarchal times it does not appear that any part of a sacrifice was eaten by the offerer, but that the whole was devoted to God, and intirely consumed with fire. But when, under the Mosaic dispensation, a particular order of men was appointed for the purpose, they were considered as the more immediate *servants of God*; and there being a manifest propriety that servants should be fed from their masters table, these priests were allowed a certain share in most sacrifices. Such, at least, is the opinion of the Jewish Rabbis with respect to the custom of sacrificing before and under the law.

Sacrifices, being of the nature of a *gift*, presented as a token of respect or homage, they

they naturally accompanied every solemn address to the divine Being, as the most decent and proper ceremonial in approaching him; and being likewise considered as a *convivial entertainment*, at which the divine Being himself was present, there was a peculiar propriety in their accompanying petitions for the pardon of sin, as expressive of reconciliation and friendship. At the same time the sacrifices being provided at the expence of the offending party, they indirectly answered the purpose of *mulcts*, or fines for offences.

Though I have said that it is possible that mankind might of themselves have had recourse to sacrifices, as a method of expressing their dependence upon God, &c. yet when we consider how improbable it is that mankind should even have attained to any tolerable and useful knowledge of God himself, without some particular instruction, at least for a long space of time; it is most natural to suppose that when the divine Being communicated that most important knowledge to the first race of men, he also instructed them in those methods by which he chose that they should express their homage, gratitude, and obedience. But whether we suppose

suppose sacrifices to have been of human or divine origin, it makes no difference with respect to the general idea of their nature and use.

§ 3. *Of the Jewish ritual.*

BESIDES the precepts and observances which it has pleased the divine Being to enjoin with respect to the whole human race, he provided what we may call a much stricter, and more severe discipline for the Hebrew nation, whom he distinguished by frequent revelations of his will, by many interpositions in their favour, and a peculiar constitution of civil government, in which he himself more immediately presided.

They were restricted in their diet, being confined to the use of certain kinds of food; but they are such as are now generally esteemed to be the most innocent in their nature, mild in their qualities, and least apt to become satiating by frequent use. They would therefore tend to impress upon the minds of those who were confined to them

an idea of their obligation to greater purity and innocence, and make them consider themselves as a *holy nation*, peculiarly devoted to God. The use of such food would also, of itself, probably, incline them to a peaceful inoffensive life, as it is thought that the ranker kinds of food tend to make mankind fierce and cruel.

A great part of the ritual of the Hebrews seems to have been intended to preserve upon their minds a sense of their immediate relation to God, and of their obligation to a constant intercourse with him. There was one particular place within their country, to which they were to resort, where the divine Being was to be consulted by them, and where he manifested himself in a more especial manner. In this place, which was first a moveable tabernacle, and afterwards the temple at Jerusalem, he had a constant habitation, keeping, as it were, a regular court, with suitable attendants. Here he received their gifts and homage, and here he gave them instructions and advice on a variety of occasions, when they applied to him in a proper manner.

More especially, the great object of the Hebrew ritual seems to have been to inspire the minds of that people with an abhorrence
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of the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, and to preserve among them the pure worship of the one only living and true God. For this reason many of their rites were the very reverse of those of their neighbours, so as to be altogether incompatible with them, and must consequently have tended to make them averse to them. Upon every occasion the importance of their adherence to this precise mode of worship was strongly inculcated upon them, a particular and remarkable providence attended them through the whole course of their history (and still attends them) giving them prosperity and success while they were obedient, and making the hand of God visible in their punishment, when they departed from his worship, and relapsed into idolatry, or when they became, in other respects, profligate and wicked.

To prevent, as far as possible, the abuse and corruption of this religion, nothing of the least consequence, was left to the discretion of the people, but every minute particular, as those relating to the structure of the tabernacle, and the building of the temple, the kinds of sacrifices, the ceremonies attending them, and every thing that was to be done on their public festivals,

was rigidly prescribed to them, and they were not allowed to make the least deviation. For the same purpose, and also to preserve a proper degree of union among a people who were originally to have had no temporal head, they were allowed to have but one altar, and no sacrifice was to be made but at that one place, and by certain persons appointed for that purpose; and three times every year, viz. at their public festivals, every male was to make his appearance before the Lord, at the place of his residence, in the tabernacle or temple.

Several things in the Hebrew ritual were perhaps intended to serve as types of Christ, or to bear some resemblance to him and his religion, and therefore the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls them “a shadow of good things to come.” Heb. x. 1.

On the other hand, it may be observed, that the author of this epistle perhaps only intended to draw a comparison between the Hebrew ritual, and such particulars in the christian system as most nearly resemble it, only as other comparisons and figures are used, merely for illustration, without supposing that there was *originally*, and in the divine mind, a reference from the one to the

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the other. Thus when the apostle Paul says, 1 Cor. xviii. 2, "that the Israelites were all baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the red sea," he can hardly be supposed to have meant that the sprinkling of the water upon that people, or their being as it were plunged in it, by the waters rising over their heads, was a proper type of baptism; but only, that by a common figure of speech, it might be so termed; or that the *rock* which supplied them with water was really Christ, as the same apostle calls it, 1. Cor. x. 4, or a type of Christ, but only that, in some respects, it might be compared to him, or he to it.

In some cases also, it is very possible that the apostles and evangelists might imagine there was a reference to Christ, when no such thing was originally intended.

It is very remarkable, that when the sacrifices under the law are spoken of in the Old Testament, as insufficient to render the offerer acceptable to God, there is never the most distant allusion to any more perfect sacrifice, to which they are commonly supposed to have referred, and of which they are said to have been the types, but to *good works* only, which are always mentioned in opposition to them. Thus David

says, Ps. li. 16, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*." Now it can hardly be supposed but that, if sacrifices had really been designed for types, there would have been, in some place or other, a reference, more or less plain, to the thing which they were intended to prefigure, and from their relation to which they derived all their efficacy.

Lastly, several of the Hebrew customs were intended to commemorate remarkable occurrences in their history, especially such as led them to recollect and reflect upon the divine interpositions in their favour. Thus the Passover was instituted in commemoration of the destroying angel having passed over the houses of the Israelites, when he killed the first-born in every family of

* This particular passage is differently rendered in the Seventy, and by this means probably the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. x. came to give a different turn to it. See, however, the following passages, which express the same sentiment with this. Is. i. 10.—lxvi. 2, &c. Jer. vi. 8, &c. Amos, v. 21, &c. Micah vi. 6, &c.

the Egyptians; the feast of Pentecost was a memorial of the giving of the law on mount Sinai; and the the feast of Tabernacles, of their residing many years in the wilderness, when they lived in tents, and were fed with manna from heaven. Also the rite of circumcision was instituted as a token and pledge of the covenant which God made with Abraham, or of the promise that he would give him the land of Canaan.

It is not easy to say how far, and in what respects, the Jewish dispensation was intended to be abrogated by christianity. Christ himself gave no hint of any such design, except it be implied in his saying, Mat. v. 18, that “one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled;” or in his discourse with the woman of Samaria, John iv. 21, “The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.—But the time cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

And though the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, ch. vii argues, in a figurative manner, that the Jews were become “dead to the law by the body of Christ, that they might be married to another,”

yet it appears from the book of Acts, that he himself strictly conformed to the temple-service, as all other Jewish christians did, after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. St. Paul did not only himself “walk orderly, and keep the law,” Acts xxi. 24, but caused Timothy to be circumcised upon his conversion to christianity, because his mother was a Jewess, though his father was a Greek. Acts xvi. 1.

With respect to *meats*, the divine Being seems to have intimated to Peter, that the distinction between clean and unclean was abolished. For by the vision of the sheet let down from heaven, Acts x. 11, and the command “Rise, Peter, kill and eat,” it seems to have been intended to intimate, not only that no nation or people were unclean in the sight of God, but that those kinds of food which the Jews had been taught to consider as unclean, were now no longer so. We also find that Peter himself, when he was among the Gentiles, at Antioch, “lived after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as the Jews,” Gal. ii. 15, though, upon the arrival of Jews from Jerusalem, he abstained, for fear of giving offence; a conduct for which he was justly reproved by Paul.

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As long as the temple stood, the service of it was kept up, and attended upon by the believing as well as the unbelieving Jews, and none of the apostles dropped so much as a hint of there being any thing improper or wrong in it. When the temple was destroyed, the service of it ceased of course, just as it did at the Babylonish captivity. But it is remarkable, that in the prophecies of Ezekiel relating to the restoration of the Jews, the most express mention is made of the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of the temple-service, and especially of sacrifices, Ezekiel xliii. 18. And it will hardly be supposed, that the conversion of the Jews to christianity will not take place at least very soon after their restoration.

As the Jews are still to continue a distinct people, and will probably be the medium of the divine communications, to the rest of the world, it is not improbable but that they will always continue to be distinguished by certain peculiar observances and religious rites; but whether the whole, or what particular part of their ancient ritual will be retained, it is impossible for us to say.

§ 4. *Of baptism.*

ALL the positive institutions, of which an account has yet been given, were antecedent to christianity. The two which remain to be treated of, viz. baptism and the Lord's supper, are peculiar to it.

Baptism is the appointed manner in which a person takes upon him the profession of christianity, or by which a person is admitted to the privileges of the disciples of Christ; and was probably intended to represent the washing away, or renouncing the impurities of some former state, viz. the sins he had committed, and the vicious habits he had contracted; and it is to be observed, that the profession of repentance always accompanied, or was understood to accompany the profession of faith in Christ. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the general exhortation both of John the Baptist and of Christ; and "Repent and believe the gospel, Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," was the general strain of the apostles' preaching. *Now, says Paul*
to

to the Athens, "God commandeth all
"men, every where, to repent." Acts, xvii.
30.

We find no account of baptism, as a distinct religious rite, before the mission of John, the forerunner of Christ, who was called *the Baptist*, on account of his being commanded by God to baptize with water all who should hearken to his invitation to repent. Washing, however, accompanied many of the Jewish rites, and indeed was required after contracting any kind of uncleanness. Also, soon after the time of our Saviour, we find it to have been the custom of the Jews solemnly to baptize, as well as to circumcise all their proselytes. As their writers treat largely of the *reasons* for this rite, and give no hint of its being a novel institution, it is probable that this had always been the custom antecedent to the time of Moses, whose account of the rite of circumcision, and of the manner of performing it, is by no means circumstantial. Or baptism after circumcising, might have come into use gradually from the natural propriety of the thing, and its easy conformity to other Jewish customs. For if no Jew could approach the tabernacle or temple, after the most trifling uncleanness,

without bathing, much less would it be thought proper to admit a profelyte from a state so impure and unclean as heathenism was conceived to be, without the same mode of purification.

When a master of a family became a profelyte to Judaism, he was required to circumcise both himself and his household. Thus Abraham was expressly commanded to circumcise both his son Ishmael, who had no interest in the promise of which circumcision was a seal, and also all his slaves, "those who were bought with his money." Gen. xvii. 13.

The reason of this practice does not easily appear to us, whose customs and modes of thinking are so different from those which prevailed, and which still prevail, in the East. The power of a master of a family was very extensive, and the actions and customs by which he expressed his own character or resolution, generally extended to all the branches of it. Thus when the Ninevites made solemn profession of their repentance, they clothed even their cattle in sackcloth, and made them fast as well as themselves; not that they could imagine that the brute beasts were capable of repentance, or could have done any thing to displease God; but this
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mournful appearance of every thing about them was conceived to be expreffive of *their own* contrition and humiliation. Jonah iii. 7.

It being the univerfal custom, therefore, for the master of a family to circumcife, and probably alfo to baptize his children and flaves, as well as himfelf, upon his making profeflion of Judaism, and the propriety of the thing being exceedingly obvious to all people in the Eaft, it would be taken for granted, that baptifm, if it was ufed at all, was to be adminiftered in the fame undiftinguifhing manner, when a perfon made profeflion of christianity ; and the command to *baptize all nations* would neceffarily have been underftood in this fenfe, unlefs our Lord had added fome exprefs reftriction.

Accordingly we find that when the jailor, who had the cuftody of Paul was converted, both himfelf was baptized, and *all his*. Acts xvi. 33. Alfo when Lydia was converted, it is faid that ſhe was baptized, and *her houſhold*, Acts xvi. 15. Now by this phraſe a Jew, and even a Roman, would neceffarily underftand that both the principal perfon himfelf, and all who were *under his immediate power*, either as a parent or a maſter, were included.

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What the Jews did with respect to young men, grown up to years of understanding, but living with their parents, when they were converted to Judaism, is not said; but it is probable that they were not circumcised without their own consent, as it most probably must generally have been the case with slaves. And since christianity is evidently more of a *personal* concern, and men are chiefly interested in it as individuals, and not as members of societies, or even of families, it may be taken for granted, that only young children were required to be baptized along with their believing parents.

As slaves, we find, were often converted without their masters, and christianity made no distinction between bond or free, as being of the same value in the eye of God, it will hardly be thought probable that slaves were ever baptized without their own consent. At least the custom did not continue long, especially as slaves were about that time growing more and more independent of their masters, acquiring civil as well as religious privileges; till at length, through the influence of maxims which christianity greatly countenanced, they were universally manumitted in Europe.

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The baptism of children, therefore, is to be considered as one part of a man's own profession of christianity, and consequently an obligation upon him to educate his children in the principles of the christian religion. If a child have no parents, or none who will engage for his religious instruction, other persons, who will undertake this kind office, are so far its parents, and therefore may baptize it, as they would do their own children.

Lastly, I would observe, that it is an argument in favour of the baptizing of infants, to which I do not see how any satisfactory reply can be made, that it appears, from the history of the christian church, to have been the constant practice from the time of the apostles. The first mention that is made of it is as of an *uncontroverted practice*, and it is even *argued from*, as an universally received custom, against very intelligent persons, to whose cause it would have been of the greatest advantage to have proved it to be novel, or of no authority. This was more especially the case with Pelagius; for though Austin, in support of his doctrine of original sin, appeals to the practice of infant baptism, as being necessary to do it away, his antagonist does
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not pretend to dispute the fact, but only denies that this was the use of it.

Now it is certainly highly improbable that such a custom as that of infant-baptism should have been established so early as it appears to have been, contrary to the apostolical practice, and no trace be left of the innovation; especially when every thing belonging to christianity, about which all persons were not entirely agreed, became so soon the subject of the most eager contention and debate. And it does not appear to be of any consequence by what argument we can infer that any opinion or practice was apostolical, whether by their own writing, or any other *sufficient evidence*. They could not themselves be mistaken in a case of this nature, and their practice is an authoritative rule for us.

§ 5. *Of the Lord's supper.*

THE Lord's supper, consisting of eating bread and drinking wine, is a religious rite instituted by Christ, in commemoration of his death; the breaking of the bread

bread more especially representing the wounding of the body of Christ, and the pouring out of the wine, the shedding of his blood; and this rite is to continue to be celebrated by the disciples of Christ till his second coming.

The design of this institution being to serve as a memorial, or record, of that important fact of the death of Christ, it may be considered as one monument of the truth of the christian religion, as was observed in the preceding volume of this work.

Being more especially a memorial of the death of Christ, in which he chiefly manifested the love that he bore to mankind, it furnishes the most proper opportunity of recollecting the love of Christ, and rejoicing in the consideration of the blessings of his gospel.

Since this rite is peculiar to christians, it likewise serves as a public declaration of our being christians, and is, consequently, a recognizing of the obligation we are under to live as becomes christians. For no man can say that he is a christian, and especially in a public and solemn manner, without acknowledging that he is obliged to live as becomes a christian. Joining habitually in
public

public worship implies very much the same thing.

Lastly as, in this rite, we more especially commemorate the death of Christ, it serves to remind us that we are the professed disciples of a crucified master, and therefore must not expect better treatment from this world than our Lord met with from it; that we must lay our account with meeting with hardships, reproach, and persecution as he did, and that we should contentedly and patiently bear them, rather than quit the profession of our faith, or do any thing unworthy of it; in full assurance that, if we “suffer for Christ, we shall also reign with him, and be glorified together.”

This rite having such excellent moral uses, and the celebration of it being an express command of Christ, who said “Do this in remembrance of me,” I do not see how any person, professing christianity, can satisfy himself with refusing to join in it. In the primitive times the celebration of the Lord’s supper made a part of the ordinary service of the Lord’s day, and every person who was thought worthy to be considered as a member of a body of christians partook of it. Whenever, indeed, any person

person professing christianity behaved in a manner unworthy of the christian name, so as to be in danger of bringing a reproach upon it, he was excommunicated; in consequence of which he was cut off from joining in any part of christian worship, and from this among the rest; but there was no distinction made between this and other parts of the service, especially the prayers of the church. An excommunicated person was one who was publicly declared not to belong to a christian society; and therefore the church would not consent to any thing that should imply their acknowledging him in the character of a brother, and declined associating with him. The reason of this conduct was most evident, because the good name of christians, and of christian societies, was a thing of the greatest consequence to the propagation of christianity in those early times; and it ought to be considered at all times as a matter of great consequence.

Considering that Christ absolutely requires of all his disciples the most open and public profession of his religion, notwithstanding all the hazards to which it may expose them, and has declared that unless we "confess him before men," he will not acknowledge

knowledge us before his heavenly Father, it certainly behoves all christians to take this, as well as every other method of declaring, in a public manner, their profession of christianity. Moreover, as baptism is generally administered in infancy, and is not the act of the person baptized, it seems necessary that there should be some public act, by which those who are baptized in their infancy should openly, and in their own persons, declare themselves christians; and the most proper manner of doing this is certainly the receiving of the Lord's supper.

According to the custom of the primitive church, a custom so ancient and uncontroverted, as, with me, to carry sufficient evidence of its having been an apostolical one, all persons who are baptized, children as well as others, should receive the Lord's supper. It is nothing less than the revival of this custom that will secure a general attendance upon this ordinance; and no objection can be made to it, except what may, with equal strength, be made to bringing children to public-worship at all, since they are as incapable of understanding the one as the other. Nor would this ancient and useful custom have been ever laid aside, if it had
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not been for the introduction of a train of superstitious notions, which made this plain and simple ordinance appear continually more mysterious and awful ; till, at length, the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation was completely established.

Indeed it is not a little remarkable, that the custom of giving the eucharist to children was not finally abolished in any place till that doctrine had obtained the full sanction of the church of Rome, and that it maintains its ground to this very day, in all those christian churches which were never subject to that antichristian power ; whose spiritual usurpations and corruptions of the gospel have been immense, and have extended to almost every thing belonging to it.

SECTION VI.

Of the government of christian churches.

I Shall conclude these observations on the positive institutions of christianity with a short account of the primitive regulations for

for the government of christian churches; which, though not of divine appointment, were such as the wisdom of the apostles thought to be the most convenient for transacting the business of christian societies, and making them subservient to the purpose of improvement in knowledge and goodness.

Christian churches were formed upon the plan of the Jewish synagogues, in which a number of the more elderly and respectable members presided, with the title of *elders*, or *overseers*, which in the Greek language is expressed by the word which in English is rendered *bishop*; and one of these persons was generally, by way of preheminance in point of *honour*, but not of *power*, styled the chief, or master of the synagogue.

The principal business of elders in christian churches was to attend equally to the instructions and good conduct of the society, and to pass censures in case of improper conduct. In general, some of them gave more particular attention to reading and exhortation, and from these elders the society usually expected an exposition of those portions of scripture which were read in their assemblies every Lord's day; but any person who was present might, with the
leave

leave of the bishop, either expound the scriptures, or exhort the people.

These elders were chosen by the people, and, with their approbation, were *ordained*, or recommended to the divine blessing by prayer, in which the elders of other churches assisted. Along with prayer they used *imposition of hands*, which was nothing more than a ceremony which they constantly used when they prayed for any particular person, on any occasion whatever; and to this the extension of the hands of the person who prayed over, or towards, any large body of people, corresponded.

Besides elders, there were also, in all christian churches, persons who attended to the civil concerns of them, under the title of *deacons*. These were generally younger persons, of good character, who, if they behaved well in this office, were afterwards advanced to the rank of elders.

At the first appointment of officers in christian churches there was no settled provision for their maintenance, but money was collected every Lord's day, out of which a distribution was made to all who stood in need of it, officers and others promiscuously. For at the first promulgation of christianity no person could have been educated for
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the ministry. All equally lived by their several professions, and therefore no person was intitled to more consideration in this respect than another. But afterwards, when christianity got a firm establishment, many young persons devoted themselves wholly to the service of christian churches, and prepared themselves for that work by a diligent study of the scriptures, and proper exercises ; and thus, giving their whole time and labour to the society, they were, as was reasonable, wholly maintained out of the funds of it.

P A R T

P A R T III.

OF THE FUTURE EXPECTATIONS
OF MANKIND DERIVED FROM REVELA-
TION.

S E C T I O N I.

Of a future state in general.

FROM the light of nature we were able to make out a tolerable system of natural religion, as far as it respects the *duty of men* in this life, though the particulars were such as can only be said to have been *discoverable* by nature, since they were not actually *discovered* by it. But nature was a much less sufficient guide with respect to the information, in which we are so much interested, concerning our expectations after death. It even left us under great uncertainty whether we should survive the

VOL. III. I grave

grave or not, though, upon the supposition of our surviving the grave, we were able, from the consideration of the equity of God's moral government, to infer that the event would be very desirable to good men, and much to be dreaded by the wicked; the former having sufficient reason, from present appearances, to conclude that the divine Being is a friend to virtue, and therefore disposed to reward them for their adherence to it; and the latter having equal reason to dread his displeasure.

Since, however, no reasons of justice or equity could lead men to expect more than an *adequate* punishment, proportioned to their crimes, there was far from being any reason to imagine that future punishments would be eternal, especially if they were exquisite; because no crimes of a finite nature, committed by frail and finite creatures, could deserve it. An alternative therefore remained, either to suppose an extinction of the wicked, with or without any other punishment; or that future sufferings would operate like the sufferings of this present life, tending to correct and amend those who are subject to them.

There was some hope, therefore, that, after an adequate punishment, those who
were

were not reclaimed in this world, might be effectually cured of their vicious propensities by the more severe and durable punishments of another, so as to enter upon a new state of trial with more advantage, though they might still be far behind those who had made the most of their present advantages. In this case, the punishments of the wicked may properly enough be said to be eternal, because they would never arrive at that state of perfection and happiness which was attained to by those who entered earlier on a course of virtue.

Such is the substance of what we were able to collect from nature concerning a future state, provided there were any such thing. From revelation we learn the actual certainty of a future state, and have an absolute assurance of its being a state of exact retribution, in which every man shall receive according to his works. But this being all that is necessary to influence our present conduct, we are still at a loss, and left in a great measure to our conjectures, with respect to the precise *nature*, and final *issue*, of the future state.

This important revelation of a future life seems to have been made to mankind in a

gradual manner. At least but little stress seems to have been laid upon it, in the early ages of the world, so that it was not fully *brought to light*, so as to become the great governing principle of men's conduct, till the dispensation of the gospel of Christ.

Enoch being said to have been *a preacher of righteousness*, and having been taken from the world without dying, perhaps in the view of multitudes, it is not very improbable, but that he might have been commissioned to announce this great doctrine to mankind. His miraculous assumption might be intended to intimate that God, being the friend of the virtuous, would provide for the continuance of their being; and they might conclude that he who could continue life without dying, could even raise men from the dead.

With the old patriarchs, and mankind in general, in the early ages of the world, the prospect of being the *founders of nations*, which every person had then the chance of being, was so great an idea, and struck them so forcibly, that it in a manner superseded all other motives to virtue. It is on this argument, therefore, and other temporal con-

considerations, that peculiar stress is laid in the exhortations to obedience addressed to them.

As the institution of Moses respected the Jews as a *nation*, and the immediate object of it was *temporal prosperity*, there is the less reason to expect a particular mention of it in his laws; though it cannot but be owned to be a little surprising, that there should be no *incidental mention* of it in any of his writings.

We find some allusions, though not very plain ones, to the state of mankind after death in several parts of the Old Testament, especially in the book of Psalms, as, Ps. xvi. 8, &c. “I have set the Lord always
“ before me, because he is at my right
“ hand I shall be moved. Therefore my
“ heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.
“ My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou
“ wilt not leave my soul in the grave, nei-
“ ther wilt thou suffer thine holy one to
“ see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the
“ path of life. In thy presence is fulness of
“ joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for
“ ever more.” Ps. xvii. 15, “As for me,
“ I shall behold thy face in righteousness. I
“ shall be satisfied when I awake with thy
“ likenesses.”

But there seems to be very express mention of a future state in the following passage of the book of Job, ch. xix. 25, “ I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.”

In the book of Daniel there is still a more express mention of a resurrection, and of the condition of the righteous and of the wicked after it. Dan. xii. 3, “ Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” There seems also to be a particular promise to Daniel of his own resurrection, in the concluding words of the book, v. 13, “ But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.”

In the history of the Maccabees, who bravely suffered death rather than abandon their religion, we see the fullest confidence in their expectation of a happy resurrection, especially in what was said by the mother
and

and her seven sons *, at their martyrdom, the particulars of which, being very striking, I shall here quote, 2 Mac. vii. 9, &c. “ And when he,” viz. the second son, “ was at the last gasp, he said, Thou, like a “ fury, takest us out of this present life, “ but the King of the world shall raise us “ up, who have died for his laws, unto “ everlasting life.” The third, speaking of his tongue and hands, which they were going to mangle, said, ver. 11, “ These I “ had from heaven, and for his laws I despise them, and from him I hope to receive “ them again.” The fourth, when he was ready to die, said, ver. 14, “ It is good, “ being put to death by men, to look for “ hope from God, to be raised up again by “ him. As for thee, thou shalt have no “ resurrection to life.” Lastly, the mother exhorted them in her own language, ver. 21, saying, “ I cannot tell how you came “ into my womb, for I neither gave you “ breath, nor life, neither was it I that “ formed the members of any one of you ; “ but doubtless the Creator of the world,

* Though this particular story should be fabulous, it is no less an evidence of the opinion that prevailed among the Jews before the time of our Saviour.

“ who formed the generation of man, will
“ also, of his own mercy, give you breath
“ and life again, as you now regard not
“ your own selves.”

The manner in which the belief of a resurrection is here expressed, clearly shows that it was no *novel* doctrine among the Jews of those times, but that they considered themselves as speaking agreeably to the faith of all their ancestors; and it is hard to conceive how they could have been mistaken in this. The doctrine of a resurrection from the dead never occurred to any of the heathens, even those who supposed that there might be a future life. It does not seem, therefore, that this general and firm expectation of the Jews, which was peculiar to themselves, and contrary to all present appearances, could have had any other origin than divine revelation, though we have no account when, or to whom, this revelation was made.

This argument, *a posteriori*, makes it probable, that David, and other writers of the Old Testament, did really refer to the doctrine of a resurrection and a future life, in those passages to which, without the knowledge of what were the sentiments of the Jews afterwards, we might naturally
enough

enough have been led to give a different interpretation. Had there been any new revelation of so important a doctrine between the time of David and the Maccabees (as it was a period in which many eminent Jewish prophets flourished) we might naturally expect to have found some particular account of it. But supposing it to have been the universal opinion of the patriarchs, founded upon some well known, though very ancient revelation, and never to have been forgotten or lost sight of by the pious Israelites, though it was quite lost with the rest of the world, we may much better satisfy ourselves with finding so little express mention of it.

With the Pharisees, among the Jews, in our Saviour's time, the expectation of a resurrection was universal; though it appears that, in some respects, they had a very imperfect idea of it; and the Sadducees altogether denied it. Thus Martha, the sister of Lazarus, says to our Saviour, when he told her that her brother should rise again, John, xi. 24, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day;" which evidently shows that she took the doctrine for granted, without seeming to have learned it from Christ.

In all the New Testament we find the greatest possible stress laid upon this doctrine. Christians having no expectations, as the Jews had, from temporal considerations, expected all their reward in a future life. All the recompense they looked for, on account of their sufferings in the cause of truth, and righteousness, was *at the resurrection of the just*. This, therefore, is the great sanction of virtue in christianity, which inculcates upon the professors of it, that they are to consider themselves as *not of this world*, but as *citizens of heaven*, and only *strangers and pilgrims upon earth*, in full assurance that, *by patient continuance in well doing*, they shall, at length, attain to *glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life*.

We likewise learn in the gospel, that Christ is appointed both to raise all the dead and to judge the world at the last day. Addressing himself to the Jews he says, John, vi. 29, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the son, and believeth on him, shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Speaking to Martha, upon the occasion of the death of Lazarus, he says, "I am the resurrection and the life;" and
when

when he was solemnly adjured by the high priest, at his trial, to say whether he was the Christ, he said, Mark xiv. 16, “ I
 “ am, and ye shall see the son of man
 “ sitting on the right-hand of power, and
 “ coming in the clouds of heaven.” Our Lord gives a more particular account of the proceedings of this great day, Mat. xxv. 31, “ When the son of man shall come in
 “ his glory, and all the holy angels with
 “ him, then shall he sit upon the throne of
 “ his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate
 “ them one from another, as the shepherd
 “ divideth his sheep from the goats; when
 “ he will say to the righteous, “ Come, ye
 “ blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;” but to the wicked he
 “ will say, “ Depart from me, ye cursed, into
 “ everlasting fire, prepared for the devil
 “ and his angels.”

The reason why Christ should be appointed by God to act this illustrious part, is pretty clearly intimated to be his being *a man*, viz. of the same rank and species with ourselves, John v. 22, “ The Father judgeth
 “ no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.” And v. 27, “ he hath

“ given him authority to execute judgment
“ also, because he is the son of man ;” so
that being, with respect to his nature, in
all respects, like ourselves, subject to the
same infirmities and passions, we may be
well assured that he will *feel for us*, and be dis-
posed to make all the reasonable allowances,
that our situation and circumstances shall
require ; so that we can have no reason to
complain, or be apprehensive of unjust se-
verity from our judge. For this reason,
among others, the author of the Epistle to
the Hebrews observes, chap. ii. 10, that
“ it became him for whom are all things,
“ and by whom are all things, to make the
“ captain of our salvation perfect through
“ sufferings ;” ver. 17, “ That in all things
“ it behoved him to be made like unto his
“ brethren ;” that he should not be an an-
gel, but “ of the seed of Abraham, that
“ he might be a merciful and faithful high-
“ priest for us.”

We are informed that, at the second
coming of Christ, the virtuous shall be
raised first, and immediately after that, a
change, which shall supersede death, will
take place upon all who are alive ; in con-
sequence of which their bodies, as well as
those which are raised from the dead, will
be-

Become incorruptible, and not subject to die any more. These particulars we are informed of in the following passages of scripture. 2 Theff. iv. 13, "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that you sorrow not as others, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them who are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Cor. xv. 42, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." ver. 50, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh
" and

“ and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of
 “ God ; neither doth corruption inherit in-
 “ corruption. Behold I shew you a mystery,
 “ we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be
 “ changed, in a moment, in the twinkling
 “ of an eye, at the last trump ; for the
 “ trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall
 “ be raised, incorruptible, and we shall be
 “ changed. For this corruptible must put
 “ on incorruption, and this mortal must
 “ put on immortality.” From hence we
 may clearly infer that all bodily imperfec-
 tions will be removed, so that every person
 will appear with his full powers of body and
 mind ; but whether any will rise in the state
 of *infancy*, we are not informed.

S E C T I O N II.

*Of the nature of future rewards and punish-
 ments.*

THE happiness of the righteous, after
 the resurrection, is expressed in such
 terms as makes it appear to be the most de-
 sirable

firable thing that can be conceived by man; but still the terms are *general*, and give us no distinct idea of the nature of it. Nor, indeed, was this at all necessary: nay, our hopes and wishes are, perhaps, more strongly engaged without that circumstance.

Sometimes the future happiness is described as *a state of rest*, Rev. xiv. 13; “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;” “for they rest from their labours, and their” “works do follow them.”

But most frequently it is spoken of as a state of *indefinite and positive happiness*. It is said of the virtuous, in the book of Revelation, ch. vii. 16, “that they shall hun-” “ger no more, neither thirst any more,” “neither shall the sun light on them, nor” “any heat; for the lamb, which is in the” “midst of the throne, shall feed them, and” “shall lead them unto living fountains of” “waters; and God shall wipe away all” “tears from their eyes.” Rev. xxi. 3, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven,” “saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is” “with men, and he will dwell with them,” “and be their God. And God shall wipe” “away all tears from their eyes, and there” “shall be no more death, neither sorrow,” “nor crying, neither shall there be any” “more

“more pain, for the former things are passed
“away.”

The happiness of the righteous is also represented as a state of *glory*, and honourable distinction, and that of the wicked as a state of infamy and disgrace. The angel informs Daniel, ch. xii. 2, that “many who
“sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
“some to everlasting life, and some to
“shame and everlasting contempt. And
“they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn
“many to righteousness as the stars for ever
“and ever.” To this passage our Lord probably alluded, when he said, Mat. xiii. 44, “Then shall the righteous shine forth
“as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.”

There can be no doubt but that, as *moral excellence* is the only preparative to future happiness, so it will be a necessary ingredient in it. And every truly good man will look forward, with joy, to the time when all sin, and every propensity to it, shall be no more, and when his nature will be as excellent as it is capable of being.

The happiness of heaven, like the happiness of generous virtue in this life, we
have

have reason to think, will not be of an indolent, but of an *active* nature; and our benevolence being perfected, we shall probably be employed in promoting the happiness of other beings; which may engage us in a variety of the most vigorous and unremitted pursuits. This idea is favoured by almost every representation which our Lord gives us, in his parables, of the rewards of the righteous. Thus it is usual with him to compare it to a *kingdom*, and the exercise of *dominion*, in various forms; which suggests the idea of a scene of great *exertion*, as well as of dignity, splendor, and authority. He that had improved two talents, was made ruler over two cities; he that had improved five talents, was made ruler over five cities; and to both of them he says, Mat. xxv. 21, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Speaking concerning the same subject, he says, Mat. xxiv. 45, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall

“ shall find so doing. Verily I say unto
“ you, that he shall make him ruler over
“ all his goods.”

Considering the intelligent nature of man, and the pleasure we naturally take in the acquisition of knowledge, it can hardly be supposed, but that an enlarged acquaintance with the works and providence of God will make a considerable part of the happiness of the wise and good hereafter. We shall probably have the best opportunity of gaining a thorough knowledge of the constitution, and mutual relations of things in the world that we inhabit; and having it in our power to converse with the chief actors in all great events, we shall be better acquainted with the true history of the world, and may thereby better trace the wonderful conduct of divine providence in all the affairs of it.

Lastly, if our natures be at all the same that they are now, we shall, no doubt, receive the highest satisfaction from conversing with our wise and virtuous acquaintance, talking over the transactions in which we were concerned in this world; when all the labours, fatigues, and sufferings, which we underwent in the cause of virtue and christianity will, like the recollection of all
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difficulties surmounted in a good cause at present, be the source of great joy and exultation.

That all the virtuous will not be admitted to the same degree of honour and happiness hereafter, is agreeable both to reason and to the scriptures, which teach us, that every man shall receive “according to his works;” that he who “sowed bountifully, shall reap “also bountifully; but he that sowed sparingly, shall reap sparingly.” 2 Cor. ix. 6.

On the other hand, the *punishment of the wicked* is described in the scriptures in such a manner, as, if the representation be at all attended to, cannot but alarm our fears to the utmost. But still the terms are *general*, and leave us to expect some very terrible, but *unknown suffering*, and of very long, but uncertain duration.

Not unfrequently the anguish of the mind, which is to be the portion of the wicked after death, is represented as derived, in a great degree, from a sense of their *exclusion from the happiness*, to which they see the virtuous, who had been the objects of their contempt and abuse, advanced; and this circumstance must necessarily be a very great aggravation of future punishment in

in *hell*, which is the term by which the place of future punishment is sometimes denominated in the scriptures. Thus when the good and virtuous are represented as going to a *marriage supper*, the wicked are said to be *shut out*, and to remain in “outer
“darkness, where shall be weeping, and
“wailing, and gnashing of teeth;” Mat. xxii. 13. This also is said to be the fate of the *unprofitable servant* who had neglected to improve his talent, Mat. xxv. 30; and of the *five foolish virgins* it is likewise said, that, coming too late, they found the door shut, and admission refused to them.

But other accounts of the future state of the wicked lead us to expect very *severe positive sufferings*, as 2 Theff. i. 7, “In that
“day shall the Lord Jesus be revealed from
“heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that
“know not God, and that obey not the
“gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who
“shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and
“from the glory of his power.”

In several passages of the scripture the state of the wicked after death is described, as has been hinted before, as a state of *shame and disgrace*, than which nothing is
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generally more dreaded by mankind; while the righteous are said “not to be ashamed before Christ at his coming.” 1 John ii. 28. And certainly the extreme folly of their conduct must appear in a striking and tormenting light to the wicked and profligate, when they shall see how shamefully they have misapplied their time and talents. And this situation will more especially affect those who are used to pride themselves in their cunning and foresight, when they shall see how miserably narrow and short sighted all their boasted schemes were. Also how must the sense of their own folly be aggravated by seeing those whom they had despised inheriting the rewards of *true wisdom*, as well as of virtue, and in knowing that all their base views, and low unworthy pursuits, are no longer concealed within their own breasts, but laid open to the perfect knowledge of all those to whose censure they are the most sensible.

Very many of those expressions by which the fate of the wicked is described in the scriptures, taken in their literal sense, denote utter *destruction*, or extinction of being. Thus the apostle Peter says, 2 Pet. iii. 7, “that the earth is reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and per-
ditiōn

“dition of ungodly men ;” and, in the passage quoted above from the Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, the punishment of the wicked is called “everlasting destruction.” If this should actually be the fate of the wicked, their punishment may more properly be said to be *eternal*, than upon the former supposition, there being no reversion of the sentence, or remission of the rigour of it.

SECTION III.

Of the duration of future punishment.

THE duration of future punishment, according to the scriptures, as I observed before, will be very long, but uncertain ; which is the general meaning of that word which we render *everlasting* ; being applied to many things which are expressly said to be of limited duration, as the priesthood of Aaron, and the kingdom in the family of David. For even if we consider Christ as intended by the seed of David, and that the duration of his dominion

was

was foretold in the prophecies, still his kingdom, we are assured, will have an end, as we learn, 1 Cor. xv. 24, “Then cometh
“the end, when he shall have delivered up
“the kingdom to God, even the Father—
“that the Son also himself shall be subject
“unto him that put all things under him,
“that God may be all in all.”

There can be no doubt but that the punishment of the wicked will be very awful; but if God be a just and righteous governor, it must be in proportion to the sins by the commission of which it is incurred; and there is no proportion between finite and infinite. Besides, in the scriptures, the divine Being appeals to mankind whether *his ways be not equal*, that is, just and reasonable, Ezekiel xviii. 25. And Abraham takes it for granted that “the judge of all
“the earth must do that which is right.” Gen. xviii. 15, that is, what is agreeable to our ideas of justice and equity. It is moreover expressly said, Ps. cviii. 9, that “God keepeth not his anger for ever,” that “in judgment he remembereth mercy,” and that “he is not extreme to mark iniquity.” These expressions seem to be intended to give us an idea of the divine character, and the general maxims of his conduct; and
must

must therefore respect his government in a future world, as well as this. Also, whenever the divine justice and mercy are compared, the latter is always represented as of greater extent than the former. Thus he is said, Ex. xx. 5, “to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the *fourth generation*, but to shew mercy to *thousands* of them that love him.”

It is remarkable that the punishment of the wicked is always described in general terms only, expressive of great and uncertain sufferings; whereas if the doctrine of the *proper eternity* of hell torments had been strictly true, we might have expected that it would be said, in so many words, that *it should have no end*, and that the greatest stress should always have been laid upon this most important circumstance, as being most interesting and alarming to all mankind.

Our Saviour, indeed, says, Mark ix. 44, that “their worm dieth not, and the fire “is not quenched;” but this is manifestly a figurative expression; and, besides, the words are taken from Isaiah lxvi. 44, where they are applied to the burning of dead bodies. All the meaning may be, that the fire shall not be quenched till it has consumed
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that which shall be committed to it, so as to have answered its destined end, that is, till those wicked persons who are doomed to those flames be destroyed, or till their vices be thoroughly corrected.

Christ also says of Judas Iscariot, Mat. xxvi. 24, that "it had been good for him, "if he had not been born." But this, again, is a figurative expression, used to denote extreme misery and distress in general, especially such as is apt to make men wish, from anguish of mind and impatience, that they had never been born; which was the case with Job, though at the time that he used such expressions as these, Job iii, it is probable that his sufferings had been greatly overballanced by his happiness.

It must likewise be allowed to be an argument of considerable weight against the proper eternity of hell torments, that the number of those who believe and obey the gospel, and of the virtuous and good in general, who alone are intitled to the happiness of heaven, is sometimes represented as small, in comparison with that of the disobedient and wicked; as when our Saviour says, Mat. vii. 13, "Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruc-

“ tion, and many there be who go in
 “ thereat. Because strait is the gate, and
 “ narrow is the way which leadeth unto
 “ life, and few there be that find it*.”
 Now there seems to be no way of reconciling this with the notion of divine goodness, but upon the supposition that the wicked will either finally perish, like plants or fruits which never come to their maturity, or that just and severe punishment will be a means of correcting and improving them. For God, having a perfect foreknowledge of all that would actually happen, cannot be supposed to have made a voluntary choice of a system, the final issue of which he knew would be the everlasting and inexpressible misery of the greater part of his creatures.

It must be allowed, however, that the scriptures represent the punishments of the wicked in a future world to be exceedingly dreadful, so that we have reason to be alarmed to the utmost extent of our fa-

* It is proper to observe, however, that, in the opinion of some, this passage, and others of a similar turn, do not relate to the final state of mankind in general; but to the state of things at the time when the words were delivered, and to the outward profession of christianity only.

culties.

culties. Even this may stagger some; but it will not appear inconsistent with the usual government of God, if it be considered, to how much anguish and distress many *single acts of sin or folly* often expose us in this life; and therefore it is very possible, that all the vices of this present state may expose us to inexpressibly greater sufferings in the life to come.

For some observations of the *moral effect* of the doctrines of the proper eternity, or non-eternity of future punishments, I must refer my reader to the first volume of this work. I shall only in this place, suggest, farther, that this, as well as every other great mistake concerning christianity, is a means of making unbelievers, who will think themselves justified in concluding, without reasoning or inquiry, that no religion can be true, or come from God, which contains a doctrine so manifestly unreasonable and absurd.

SECTION IV.

Of the time and place of future rewards and punishments.

IT has long been the general opinion of christians, that the reward of the virtuous and the punishment of the wicked will take place immediately after death, when the soul will exist in a conscious state, separate from the body, till the resurrection. But it appears to me that the notion of the separate existence of the soul, on which this whole doctrine is founded, is built intirely on the false philosophy of the East, according to which, human souls are lapsed angels, fettered in these gross bodies; and is by no means favoured by *present appearances*, according to which the power of thinking depends intirely upon the body, and especially upon the brain; so that any injury being done to the one, a proportionable injury is done to the other.

If thought be suspended in sound sleep, and if for a time we be wholly deprived of
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it by a blow on the head, much more must all our faculties be deranged, and a period be put to sensation and thought by death. And though *particular texts*, especially as they have been usually translated, are speciously enough alledged in favour of an intermediate conscious state, just as single texts have been, with equal plausibility, alledged in favour of all the doctrines of Popery and Calvinism; yet scriptural arguments of a more *general nature*, derived from a comprehensive view of the order and design of revelation, which are a much surer guide to truth, are strongly conclusive against it.

If the soul be capable of an existence separate from the body, and, as is generally supposed by those who adopt this opinion, be capable of a greater exertion of its powers, when unfettered from this incumbrance of the flesh, what reason could there be for a *resurrection*? The affection which some persons arbitrarily suppose that the soul must have for its old companion, is absurd, when it was always a clog and a burden to it.

Also what occasion was there for a *general judgment*, at the last day, which is clearly the scripture doctrine, if there will have been a previous separate judgment for

every individual of mankind, and they will all have actually received their proper reward and punishment before that time; which, with respect to some of them, will have continued several thousand years. Upon this plan, the general judgment must be a mere piece of pomp and parade, without any real use. Whereas, on the contrary, both the righteous and the wicked are represented by our Lord, in his account of the proceedings of that great day, Mat. xxv, as totally ignorant of their future state, and expressing their surprize at the decision of their judge; when, according to this hypothesis, they could not but have been acquainted with it, by dear or joyful experience, long before.

If we examine the scripture *promises*, we shall find no hint given of any thing taking place to the advantage of good men before *the coming of Christ* to judgment. When our Lord encourages persons to give to the poor, he says, Luke xiv. 14, "They cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just," not before. The apostle Paul, speaking of the duty and expectations of christians, directs their views to the same great event, and to nothing before, or short

short of it. Titus ii. 11, “ For the grace of
“ God, which bringeth salvation, hath ap-
“ peared unto all men, teaching us that
“ denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts,
“ we should live soberly, righteously, and
“ godly, in this present world, looking for
“ that blessed hope, and the glorious appear-
“ ing of the great God, and our Saviour
“ Jesus Christ.” The apostle Peter had no
other idea when he said, 1 Pet. iv. 12,
“ Beloved, think it not strange concerning
“ the fiery trial, which is to try you, as
“ though some strange thing happened unto
“ you. But rejoice, in as much as ye are
“ partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when
“ his glory shall be revealed, ye may be
“ glad also with exceeding joy.”

The same only time of the reward of the
righteous, and the punishment of the
wicked, is also particularly mentioned, Rev.
xi. 16, where the four and twenty elders are
said to fall down upon their faces, and to
worship God, saying, “ We give thee
“ thanks, O Lord God almighty, because
“ thou hast taken to thyself thy great
“ power and hast reigned. And the na-
“ tions were angry, and thy wrath is come,
“ and the time of the dead that they should
“ be judged, and that thou shouldest give

“reward unto thy servants the prophets,
“and to the saints, and them that fear thy
“name, small and great, and shouldest de-
“stroy them who destroy (or corrupt) the
“earth.” All the exhortations of the New
Testament go upon this same proper
christian principle.

The punishment of the wicked is also al-
ways represented as taking place at the
same time, viz. the day of judgment, and
not before. Thus it is only “at the end
“of the world,” Mat. xiii. 14, that our
Lord says “the Son of man shall send forth
“his angels;” when “they shall gather
“out of his kingdom all things that shall
“offend and them that do iniquity, and
“shall cast them into a furnace of fire.
“Then,” and not before, “shall the
“righteous shine forth as the sun in the
“kingdom of their Father.”

When the apostles write to comfort the
friends of deceased christians, they drop
not the most distant hint of their enjoying
any degree of happiness at present, which is
a topic which they could not possibly have
overlooked on such an occasion, if they had
really believed it, even though they had
imagined that the resurrection was ever so
near at hand. It is plain, however, that
the

the apostle Paul had not the notion of the resurrection being so very near when he wrote the Epistle to the Thessalonians, whom he endeavours to comfort upon this occasion. For in the second Epistle, which, in this respect, is only explanatory of the former, he speaks of the rise, progress, and destruction of the *man of sin*, as to take place before this great event.

On the contrary, all the consolation that he has to offer, is derived from the prospect of the joyful resurrection of their deceased friends. 1. Thess. iv. 13, “I would not
“have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you
“sorrow not even as others who have no
“hope. For if we believe that Jesus died,
“and rose again, even them also who sleep in
“Jesus will God bring with him. — Where-
“fore comfort one another with these
“words.” The very phrase which the apostle here makes use of, viz. “sleeping
“in Jesus,” clearly implies that he had no idea of their being awake, alive, and happy.

Besides, we see, in this very passage, that the apostle was apprehensive that the persons to whom he was writing would imagine that they who should be alive at the

second coming of Christ, would at least have *some advantage* over those who should be raised from the dead. For so the word *φθασωμεν* ought to be rendered, and not *prevent*, as in our translation. This suspicion the apostle endeavours to obviate, by showing that, of the two, those who had been dead would rather have the advantage of the living; since the resurrection of the dead would precede the change that was to pass upon those who should be found alive; and this he relates as by express revelation from Christ, ver. 15, “For this we say unto
 “you, by the word of the Lord, that we
 “who are alive, and remain unto the coming
 “of the Lord, shall have no advantage over
 “them who are asleep, for—the dead in
 “Christ shall rise first. Then we who are
 “alive and remain shall be caught up to-
 “gether with them in the clouds, &c.”

Nothing can be more evident from the consideration of the whole of this passage, than that both the apprehensions of the Thessalonians, and the method which the apostle takes to silence them, go upon the supposition, that neither he nor they had the least notion of any intermediate state.

I would observe, by the way, that by the phrase *being with Christ*, the ancients
 never

never understood any degree of happiness that could be enjoyed by good men before the resurrection. For even those christians who, from their leaning to the principles of the oriental or Greek philosophy, imagined that the soul had a separate existence, still supposed that it continued in Hades till the resurrection; and, at that time only, upon being united to the body, was taken into heaven, to be with Christ. Indeed, our Lord himself says, John xiv. 3, that he must *come again* before he can *receive his disciples to himself*; so that the apostles could not possibly have any expectation of being with Christ before that time.

I think it must a little embarrass the advocates for an intermediate state, to consider how the apostle Paul could avoid making mention of it, or alluding to it, in his long discourse concerning the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv, when the subjects must be allowed to have a very near connection; or how he could represent the consequences of disbelieving the resurrection to be so very great as he describes them; if the souls of all good men were, immediately after death, made completely happy with God and Christ in heaven. On the other hand, it

is plain, from the whole tenor of his writings, that neither he nor the Corinthians had any idea of such an intermediate state; since the consequence of their error was nothing less than this, that if there be no resurrection, both *his preaching* and *their faith* were *altogether vain*, ver. 14, “also” “those who were asleep in Christ were” “perished, ver. 18, and “they,” the apostles, “having no hope but in this life, “were of all men the most miserable.”

Lastly, our Saviour’s argument with the Sadducees in proof of a resurrection, from the words of God to Moses, “I am the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” Matt. xxii. 31, Mark xii. 26, Luke xx. 37, is this, that since God is their God, those patriarchs, even now that they have no life, *live unto him*; that is, they have existence in his sight, who looks into futurity. For had they been actually alive, and happy at that very time, it might have been replied, that the promise which is implied in God’s being *their God*, was sufficiently fulfilled without a resurrection. Indeed, his argument might have been thought to be calculated to prove an intermediate state only, had he not expressly said, that what he advanced was to prove a resurrection, *that the dead shall arise*. He does

does not so much as mention any state of conscious existence before it ; so that, from the circumstances of the discourse, we may safely conclude, that he had no idea of any such thing.

It may be said that our Saviour's parable of the rich man and Lazarus, goes upon the supposition of there being an intermediate state. But this parable is only a personification of what had no real sense ; for he does not speak of the soul being separate from the body, but of the *whole man*, as having passed into the state of death, and therefore mentions the *tongue* of the rich man as tormented in a flame. In the same manner Isaiah personifies the dead king of Babylon, whom he, at the same time, speaks of as consumed by the worms. Isa. xiv. 9, “ Hell
“ from beneath is moved for thee, to meet
“ thee at thy coming. It stirreth up the
“ dead for thee, even all the chief ones of
“ the earth. It hath raised up from their
“ thrones all the kings of the nations. All
“ they shall speak, and say unto thee, Art
“ thou also become weak as we, art thou
“ become like unto us ? Thy pomp is
“ brought down to the grave, and the
“ noise of thy viols. The worm is spread
“ under thee, and the worms cover thee.”

There

There is also an instance of a personification similar to this in Rev. vi. 9, where the *souls of the martyrs* are represented as crying to God from under the altar (the place where the blood of sacrificed victims was poured out) to avenge their blood. But, in other places, *blood* itself is represented as crying for vengeance.

Our Saviour said to the thief upon the cross, “ This day shalt thou be with me in “ paradise.” But this saying is too obscure to found any certain opinion upon. It may only signify that the promise was made that day, notwithstanding his present state of humiliation; or, by *paradise*, our Lord might mean the unconscious state of the virtuous dead, a state of mere rest, but wherein they are secure under the protection of divine benevolence, and reserved for the accomplishment of its purposes in their favour. The Jews supposed their *sheol*, or the state of the dead, to be divided into two regions, viz. *paradise* for the good, and *gehenna* for the wicked. See Windet de Vita functorum Statu, p. 109.

A passage in the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians is urged with the greatest appearance of strength in favour of an intermediate state; but when the whole context is

is rightly considered, it will appear to imply no such thing, as is, I think, sufficiently proved in Alexander's Dissertation, prefixed to his Commentary on 1 Cor. xv. The apostle, writing from Rome, not long before his death, says, Phil. i. 21, "To
" me to live is Christ," i. e. Christ will be glorified by my labours, and, "to die is
" gain," as I shall then be delivered from
" a state of persecution and suffering; but
" if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of
" my labours, yet what I shall chuse I wot
" not. For I am in a strait between two;" or, as it might have been rendered, "I am
" straitened by two things," viz. the prospect of life, or of death. Neither of them are the objects of my choice, "having a
" desire to depart and to be with Christ," which is far better; wishing, if it were possible, to be delivered at once from mortality, by the coming of Christ, and so be immediately with him. That this must be the sense of the passage is evident from what I have observed before, viz. that "being
" with Christ" always refers to his second coming, at the resurrection. "Nevertheless," the apostle goes on to say, "to
" abide in the flesh is more needful
" for you;" that is, of the two things
which

which are not the objects of my desire, viz. life or death, more good will accrue to you from the former, and therefore I prefer it.

The same considerations may also help us to the right understanding of the same apostle in 2 Cor. i. 8, “ We are willing
 “ rather to be absent from the body, and
 “ to be present with the Lord ;” that is, we prefer the future life, which commences at the resurrection, and in which alone we shall be with Christ, to the present, in which we are absent from him. He particularly excepts against the idea of being *unclothed*, or *naked*, ver. 4, “ For we that are in this
 “ tabernacle do groan, being burdened,
 “ not that we would be unclothed, but
 “ clothed upon, that mortality might be
 “ swallowed up of life.”

Now this being “ clothed upon,” or, as it is expressed, ver. 2, “ clothed upon with an
 “ house which is from heaven,” certainly refers to the bodies which we are to receive at the resurrection ; and it is evident from ver. 1, that the apostle had no idea of any state between that and the present. “ For
 “ we know that if our earthly house of this
 “ tabernacle be dissolved, we have a build-
 “ ing of God, a house not made with
 “ hands, eternal in the heavens.” And
 since,

since, in the sleep of death, we cannot be sensible of any interval of time, how long soever it may really be, the one will seem immediately to succeed the other; so that it will appear to us, that the very next moment after closing our eyes in death, we awake at the general resurrection, which is a most sublime and alarming consideration.

Other *single passages* of scripture are produced in favour of the doctrine of an intermediate state, but none so plausibly as these, and with me they weigh nothing against the force of the *general arguments* above mentioned.

As to the *place* where the virtuous or the vicious will be disposed of after death, it is absolutely unknown to us, especially the latter; for, as to the former, the apostle Peter seems to intimate, that good men will inhabit this earth after it has been destroyed by fire, and been made habitable again in a more advantageous form, 2 Pet. iii. 7, “ The heavens and the earth which
 “ are now, are reserved unto fire, against the
 “ day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly
 “ men.” Ver. 10, “ The day of the Lord
 “ cometh as a thief in the night, in which
 “ the heavens shall pass away with a great
 “ noise, and the elements shall melt with
 “ fervent

“ fervent heat, and the earth alfo, and the
 “ works that are therein, fhall be burned
 “ up.” Ver. 13, “ Nevertheless we, ac-
 “ cording to his promife, look for new
 “ heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth
 “ righteoufnefs.”

As the apoftle fays, that “ the earth is
 “ referved unto fire againft the day of judg-
 “ ment, and the perdition of ungodly
 “ men;” it fhould feem, that the deftruc-
 tion of this world by fire is to have fome
 connection with the punifhment of the
 wicked, and may perhaps be the immediate
 instrument of it. If this be the cafe, there
 will be fomething more than figurative in
 the description of the torments of the wick-
 ed in the fcriptures, as caufed by *fire*, and
 this fire may terminate in the utter extinc-
 tion of the wicked. But thefe, it muft be
 acknowledged are mere conjectures.

A learned friend, being difatisfied with
 the preceding interpretation of the paffage
 in the Epiftle to the Philippians, has sug-
 gested another, which, to gratify my rea-
 ders, I fhall here infert,

I freely own that I am not fatisfied with
 this explanation of Phil. i. 21 ; firft, becaufe
 the

the apostle does not appear to me to write under any depression, but rather with triumph and exultation, ver. 20, “According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.”

Secondly, The apostle does not seem to have considered the two things by which he says he was straitened as *evil*, but rather as *good*, and both of them as objects of earnest choice; so good, that his difficulty was which to prefer, whether to live to Christ, i. e. for the furtherance of the gospel, and the salvation of his fellow-creatures through him, which had long been the object of his ardent wishes, and earnest cares and labours, or to die and be with Christ, which would be a gain to himself, and far better for his personal interest. From the whole preceding context, from ver. 12, the apostle appears to have had at the time of writing no painful feelings of what he had already suffered, either from the malice of open enemies, or treachery of false friends, nor formidable apprehensions of what might yet await him. He rather expresses a quite different state of mind in those words, ver. 18, “And

“ And I therein do rejoice, yea and will
 “ rejoice;” a state of mind pretty much
 similar to that which he professed to the
 elders of Ephesus, Acts xx. 22—24.

However, I do not think it will follow,
 that the apostle meant by the words, *to die*
is gain, and *to depart and to be with Christ*,
which is far better, to convey an idea of a
 state of *consciousness* and *positive happiness*,
 which he should enjoy with Christ from the
 instant of his death till the resurrection. It
 is enough to justify the expressions, and his
 desire to depart, if we only suppose him to
 mean, that he should not only be exempt-
 ed from farther danger, suffering, opposi-
 tion, and treachery from others, but also
 from care, solicitude, and apprehensions in
 himself about his own eternal interests,
 which he so pathetically expresses, ch iii. 8—
 14. and 1 Cor. ix. 27, and elsewhere; that
 from thenceforth he and his interests would
 be in *security* under the faithful protection of
 a powerful Saviour. He would be with
 Christ in the same sense as Christ promised
 to the penitent thief, that he should be
 with him that day in paradise, i. e. in the
 state of those dead who are, as it were, with-
 in the enclosure of divine benevolence and
 power, reserved for the accomplishment of
 divine

divine purposes and promises. Now surely to be admitted to such a state of security, is a proper object of desire to a good mind, even preferably to the continuance of an useful life, but exposed to fears, dangers, and sufferings, both from within and without.

This also seems conformable to the apostle's sentiments and expressions on other occasions, 2 Tim. iv. 6—8, “ I am now ready “ to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the “ good fight, I have finished my course, I “ have kept the faith. Henceforth,” he does not say, I shall be happy with Christ, but “ there is laid up (*ἀπονεμίται*) for me a “ crown of righteousness, which the Lord, “ the righteous judge, shall give me at that “ day;” and, chap. i. 12, of the same Epistle, “ I know whom I have believed, “ and I am persuaded that he is able” (not to make me happy with himself immediately, but) “ to keep that which I have “ committed unto him against that day.” I conceive, that the apostle means to convey the same sentiment, that the lives and happiness of his disciples are intrusted to the care and protection of Christ, to be by him restored and perfected at the last day, in those words, Colos. iii. 3, 4, “ For ye are dead,”
(a figure

(a figure by no means too strong to denote not only the spiritual professions, but the hazardous circumstances of christians at that time) “ and your life is hid with Christ in “ God. When Christ, who is our life shall “ appear, then shall ye also appear with “ him in glory.” The same sentiment seems also to be couched under, and an attention to it throws a beautiful and strong light on that otherwise obscure passage, 1 Thess. iv. 14. “ Even so them also which sleep in “ Jesus, will God bring with him ;” intimating, that they are already committed to him by God as a deposit or trust, and that God will then bring them with him, that he may accomplish the purposes of the trust.

The apostle seems to have borrowed these sentiments and modes of expression, on the subject of the security of dead Christians, as reserved in the hands, and under the protection of Christ unto a glorious resurrection, from the words of Christ himself, John vi. 39, “ This is the Father’s will “ which hath sent me, that of all which he “ hath given me I should lose nothing, but “ should raise it up again at the last day ;” and ch. x. 28, 29, “ I give unto them “ eternal life, and they shall never perish, “ neither

“neither shall any pluck them out of my
“hand. My Father which gave them me
“is greater than all, and none is able to
“pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”
Hence we see the reason and propriety of
dying Stephen’s invocation, Acts vii. 59,
“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

Upon the whole, by *being with Christ*,
the apostle seems to me to mean being in a
state of security with him, under the pro-
tection of divine power, and the sanction
of his faithful promise, reserved as a trust
or deposit committed to him both by God
and ourselves, in order to be restored to life,
and made completely happy by him at the
resurrection of the just.

SECTION V.

*Of the future condition of the world in ge-
neral.*

THE great events of the resurrection
of the dead, the day of judgment,
and a state of retribution afterwards, are
such

such as all mankind are most nearly interested in, as *individuals*. But there are, likewise, other *intermediate events*, which are foretold with sufficient clearness in the scriptures, in which we are interested as *members of civil societies*, or, at least, as well-wishers to the cause of christianity and virtue in the world. Of these I shall briefly mention a few, that are the most considerable.

The power of *antichrist*, mentioned by different names in several parts of the scriptures, by which almost all interpreters understand the usurpations of the pope of Rome, is to be finally overthrown. Several different steps are to be taken in order to the reduction of this enormous power, as is most probably the meaning of the *seven vials*, which are said, in the book of Revelation, to be poured, in succession, upon the *beast*, which is synonymous to antichrist. And since it is evident, from the state of the world, that the papal power has long been upon the decline, we may conclude that several of these vials are already poured out.

But the utter destruction of antichrist seems to be reserved for a more remarkable period, which is often denominated in the scrip-

scriptures by *the coming of Christ*, as was also the period in which Jerusalem was destroyed; so that probably this coming also will not be a literal one, but figurative, representing a most eminent judicial proceeding, in the exertion of that *power in heaven and in earth*, which was given to Christ after his resurrection. The apostle says, of this *man of sin*) by which there can be no doubt of the same antichristian power being intended) that the Lord shall “consume him “with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy “him with the brightness of his coming,” 2 Thess. ii. 8.

This same coming of Christ seems to be described by the apostle John, in the book of the Revelation, in such a manner, as to lead us to conclude, that the powers of this world will make a violent, but ineffectual opposition to this event; and that when it has taken place, christianity, then restored to a state of great purity, by the destruction of the power which had introduced and supported the corruptions of it, will prevail through the whole world, for a space which, in the prophetic language, is called *a thousand years*.

Nothing less than this can be denoted by the reign of Christ upon earth, and the re-

urrection of the martyrs, and others who opposed the antichristian corruptions of the gospel, to live and reign with him, in the following passage. Rev. xix. 11, “ And
“ I saw heaven opened, and behold a white
“ horse, and he that sat upon him was
“ called faithful, and true ; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war—
“ and his name is called the Word of God ;
“ and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in
“ white linen, white and clean. And out
“ of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that
“ with it he should smite the nations ; and
“ he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and
“ he treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God.—And
“ I saw the beast, and the kings of the
“ earth, and their armies gathered together,
“ to make war against him that sat on the
“ horse, and against his army. And the
“ beast was taken, and with him the false
“ prophet, that wrought miracles before
“ him, with which he deceived them that
“ had received the mark of the beast, and
“ them that worshiped his image. These
“ both were cast alive into a lake of fire
“ burning with brimstone—And I saw an
“ angel come down from heaven, having
“ the

“ the key of the bottomless pit, and a great
“ chain in his hand. And he laid hold of
“ the dragon, that old serpent, which is
“ the devil and satan, and bound him a
“ thousand years. And thrust him into the
“ bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set
“ a seal upon him, that he should deceive
“ the nations no more till the thousand
“ years should be fulfilled, and after that he
“ must be loosed a little season. And I saw
“ thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw
“ the souls of them that were beheaded for
“ the witness of Jesus, and for the word of
“ God, and who had not worshiped the
“ beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or
“ in their hands, and they lived and reigned
“ with Christ a thousand years. But the
“ rest of the dead lived not again until the
“ thousand years were finished. This is the
“ first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he
“ that hath part in the first resurrection.
“ On such the second death hath no power,
“ but they shall be priests of God, and of
“ Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Some have supposed that Christ himself will reign in person upon earth, and that

the martyrs will actually rise from the dead, and live with him; but considering the figurative language of prophecy, it is more probable that the revival of the cause for which they suffered is, in reality, the thing denoted by it. Besides, it is contrary to the clear sense of many passages of scripture, that any persons, however distinguished by their virtues, or sufferings, should receive their reward before the great day of judgment, after the general resurrection. Dr. Whitby has also advanced other very sufficient arguments against the literal interpretation of the millenium, which was adopted by some of the ancients, and, with some variations, hath been patronized by several modern divines, especially Mr. Joseph-Mede, and bishop Newton.

The circumstance which makes this passage look the most like the literal description of an event is its being said, that “the rest of the dead shall not live again till those thousand years be ended.” But if the resurrection of the martyrs may only denote the revival of their cause, the *rest of the dead*, may signify their enemies, and their resurrection may denote the recovery of their power also.

As a *day* in the prophetical language is generally

generally, and I think very justly, supposed to stand for a *year*, I do not see why we should not follow the same rule in the interpretation of these thousand years; as it seems to me that nothing but the very great length of that period has induced interpreters to acquiesce in the literal sense. But it should be considered, in favour of the figurative interpretation, that, with respect to knowledge, and improvements of all kinds, the world is yet but in its infancy, and will probably continue to be so several centuries more. Even the extent of it, is not yet known; the greatest part, and perhaps the very best part of it, is yet in a manner uninhabited; and far the greatest part absolutely uncivilized: not to say that even the best policed states abound with so many absurd institutions by which the many are miserably enslaved by the few (which is so unfavourable to the happiness of the whole) that, compared with what human society is naturally capable of, they hardly deserve to be termed better than barbarous.

Now if we consider how very slowly mankind has advanced in political, and all kinds of improvements, how gradual has been the progress of all discoveries in science, and of excellence in the arts, we can hardly ima-

gine (though this progress be evidently more rapid at present than it has been in any former age of the world, and though there is no reason to apprehend any more great interruptions in valuable improvements, and therefore we may expect them to go on with an accelerated progress) that a thousand years can be sufficient to bring the present system of the world, and the present race of mankind, to any thing like what may be called their *mature state*; and till this be attained, it cannot but appear improbable that an end should be put to their existence. And allowing a period of *manhood*, in proportion to this long *infancy* of the human species, three hundred and sixty thousand years will not be deemed a disproportioned age of the world.

As to the fabulous tradition of the Jews, that the world is to continue seven thousand years, viz. four thousand before the Messiah, two thousand more before the millennium, and one thousand afterwards, which seems to have weighed much with bishop Newton and others; besides that it cannot be pretended to have any other than Rabbinical authority, it appears upon the very face of it, so very idle and chimerical, that I wonder it should have met with any regard from christians.

That

That the Jews shall return to their own country about the time of the commencement of the millenium, that they shall possess it many years in peace, and be a very flourishing nation, seem to be most distinctly foretold in many prophecies of the Old Testament, which plainly refer to a return of this people, after a much longer, and more complete dispersion of them, than that which attended the Babylonish captivity. Besides, several of these prophecies were delivered after their return from Babylon, and therefore must refer to another return, subsequent to it, and which therefore has not yet taken place. Also the restoration of the ten tribes of Israel is spoken of, as well as that of Judah ; and the ten tribes cannot be said to have returned from captivity at all yet. In proof of this I shall recite a few of the more express of these prophecies, by which it will also appear, that this nation is still to be distinguished by God, and to be the medium of his communications to the rest of the world.

Jer. xxx. 3, “ For lo the day is come,
“ saith the Lord, that I will bring again
“ the captivity of my people Israel and Ju-
“ dah, saith the Lord, and I will cause
“ them to return to the land that I gave to
L 4 “ their

“ their fathers, and they shall possess it.”
 ver. 10, “ Therefore, fear not thou, O my
 “ servant Jacob, saith the Lord, neither be
 “ dismayed O Israel ; for lo I will save thee
 “ from afar, and thy seed from the land of
 “ their captivity. And Jacob shall return,
 “ and shall be in rest and quiet, and none
 “ shall make him afraid. For I am with
 “ thee, saith the Lord, to save thee.—
 “ Though I make a full end of all the na-
 “ tions whither I have scattered thee, yet
 “ will I not make a full end of thee, but I
 “ will correct thee in measure.”

Zechariah, who wrote after the return of the Jews from Babylon, distinctly points out the same event, intimating, with many other prophets, that it will be attended with great calamities to those nations who shall oppose the settlement of the Jews in their own country, and also that they will bitterly repent of their sin in murdering Christ.

Zech. xii. 6, “ In that day will I make
 “ the governors of Judah like a hearth of
 “ of fire among the wood, and like a torch
 “ of fire in a sheaf, and they shall devour
 “ all the people round about, on the right
 “ hand and on the left, and Jerusalem shall
 “ be inhabited again in her own place ;
 “ and

“ and it shall come to pass in that day, that
 “ I will seek to destroy all the nations that
 “ come against Jerusalem. And I will
 “ pour upon the house of David, and upon
 “ the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of
 “ grace and of supplications, and they shall
 “ look upon *him** whom they have pierced,
 “ and they shall mourn for him, as one that
 “ mourneth for his only son, and shall be
 “ in bitterness for him, as one that is in
 “ bitterness for his first-born.”

Daniel also distinctly foretells the same event, and he seems to connect it with the destruction of a power, which, from his description of its rise and progress, most interpreters conclude must mean the Turkish, which has so long been in possession of the Holy Land. Whenever, therefore, this signal event shall take place (which is likewise probably denoted by the pouring out of the sixth vial in the book of the Revelation) we may be looking forward for some other very great and glorious events, but which will be preceded by some very calamitous ones, respecting almost all the known

* For the authority of this reading, see *Mr. Eyre's Observations on the Prophecies relating to the Restoration of the Jews.*

world, as the following prophecy, together with others in the Revelation, plainly intimate.

Dan. xi. 40, “ And at the time of the
 “ end, shall the king of the South (the Sa-
 “ racens) push at him (the Roman em-
 “ pire), and the king of the North (the
 “ Turks) shall come against him like a
 “ whirlwind, with chariots, and with horse-
 “ men, and with many ships, and he shall
 “ enter into the countries, and shall over-
 “ flow and pass over. He shall enter also
 “ into the glorious land, and many coun-
 “ tries shall be overthrown. But these shall
 “ escape out of his hand, even Edom and
 “ Moab, and the chief of the children of
 “ Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand
 “ also over the countries, and the land of
 “ Egypt shall not escape; but he shall have
 “ power over the treasures of gold and
 “ silver, and over all the precious things of
 “ Egypt; and the Lybians and Ethiopians
 “ shall be at his steps. But tidings out of
 “ the East, and out of the North shall
 “ trouble him; therefore, he shall go forth
 “ with great fury, to destroy, and utterly to
 “ make away many. And he shall plant
 “ the tabernacles of his palace between the
 “ seas

“ seas, in the glorious holy mountain ; yet
“ he shall come to his end, and none shall
“ help him. And at that time shall
“ Michael stand up, the great prince who
“ standeth for the children of thy people,
“ and there shall be a time of trouble, such
“ as never was since there was a nation,
“ even to that same time. And at that
“ time thy people shall be delivered, every
“ one that shall be found written in the
“ book.”

That great calamitous events await the present governments of Europe, seems to be sufficiently evident without a spirit of prophecy. “ The state of Europe,” as Dr. Hartley observes, (see his *Observations on Man*, vol. ii. p. 455.) “ is so particularly critical and alarming, that hardly any thing less than universal confusion must be the consequence ; and if famine and pestilence should accompany civil commotions, it will indeed be a time of trouble, as Daniel says, such as was never known before.”

The present kingdoms of Europe are unquestionably represented by the feet and toes of the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his prophetic dream ; and upon the feet of this image will fall the

stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which represents the kingdom to be set up by Christ, and which, after dashing in pieces the whole image, will itself become a great mountain, filling the whole earth. From Daniel's interpretation of this vision it may be clearly inferred, that the forms of government, ecclesiastical and civil, which now subsist in Europe, must be dissolved; but that something very different from them, and greatly superior to them, more favourable to the virtue and happiness of mankind, will take place in their stead. That this is the meaning of the prophecy can hardly be doubted by any person who shall give the least attention to it. Dan. ii. 44, "And in the days of these kings shall
"the God of heaven set up a kingdom
"which shall never be destroyed; and the
"kingdom shall not be left to other people,
"but it shall break in pieces, and consume
"all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for
"ever."

When the prophetic thousand years above mentioned shall be expired, we are informed by the same spirit of prophecy, that there will be another prevalence of infidelity and wickedness, which will bring on the
last

last crisis and final dissolution of the world. The following is the prophetical description of this great event. Rev. xx. 7, “ And
“ when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and
“ shall go out to deceive the nations which
“ are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog
“ and Magog to gather them together to
“ battle, the number of whom is as the
“ sand of the sea. And they went up on
“ the breadth of the earth, and compassed
“ the camp of the saints and the beloved
“ city, and fire came down from God out
“ of heaven and devoured them. And the
“ devil that deceived them was cast into the
“ lake of fire and brimstone, where the
“ beast and the false prophet are, and shall
“ be tormented day and night for ever and
“ ever. And I saw a great white throne,
“ and him that sat on it, from whose face the
“ earth and the heaven fled away, and
“ there was no place found for them. And
“ I saw the dead, small and great, stand
“ before God, and the books were opened,
“ and another book was opened, which is
“ the book of life, and the dead were judged
“ out of those things which were written
“ in the books, according to their works.
“ And

“ And the sea gave up the dead which were
“ in it, and death and the grave delivered
“ up the dead which were in them, and
“ they were judged every man according to
“ their works. And I saw a new heaven
“ and a new earth, for the first heaven and
“ the first earth were passed away.”

A P P E N D I X.

SECTION I.

Of other intelligent beings besides man.

WE learn from the scriptures, that other intelligent beings, besides men, have had occasional intercourse with this world. *Angels* are particularly spoken of as the messengers of God to the patriarchs and prophets, and are also said to have been the instruments which he has employed in the distribution of his blessings or judgments. Thus an angel was sent to rescue Lot, Gen. xix; and to announce the birth of Sampson. Jud. xiii. One whose name we are told is *Michael*, is said, Dan. xviii. 13, to be "one of the chief princes;" and, ch. xii. 1, "the great prince who standeth for the children of Israel." The same is called the *archangel*, Jude ix. Another, whose

whose name is called *Gabriel*, interpreted two visions to the prophet Daniel, ch. viii. 16, ix. 21. The same also appeared to Mary, to announce to her the conception of Jesus.

What rank these beings hold with respect to intellectual powers is altogether unknown to us; for we can by no means infer from their being immediately employed by God, that they are naturally endued with any extraordinary share of understanding. This, at least, we are not led to infer, from the choice which God has thought proper to make of prophets of the human race. Indeed, his own wisdom was often rendered the more conspicuous by their weakness. Nor is their employment an absolute proof of superior goodness.

It must be allowed, however, that, considering angels as beings in a higher, and ourselves in a lower station, it was not unnatural to imagine that they were much superior to us in power, wisdom, virtue, and happiness. Accordingly, we find the woman who applied to Job, 2 Sam. xiv. 17. 20, speaking of angels as possessed of extraordinary wisdom “knowing all things that
“are in the earth;” and having the most perfect discernment of characters; and

Achish, a king of the Philistines, 1 Sam. xxix. 9, compares the innocence of David to that of an angel. Also David himself speaks of the angels as *excelling in strength*, Ps. ciii. 20.

If it be true that some of these angels have sinned, so as to have been cast out of heaven, and to continue still abandoned to impiety, making it their business to seduce mankind, and taking pleasure in doing them all kinds of injury (though, not knowing their situation, we cannot judge completely of their temptation, yet) we can hardly imagine, that they could have had much greater strength of mind than men are generally possessed of, or have had originally a disposition more favourable to virtue.

This fall of angels, I must own, however, appears to me to be very problematical; and though it cannot be said that the thing is absolutely impossible, it seems, upon the face of it, to be very improbable? Besides, if such exalted beings as these are supposed to have sinned, and have thereby become obnoxious to the divine displeasure, what end could it answer to them to be so assiduous in seducing mankind? Indeed, upon the supposition that their existence and torments were to be everlasting, it may be conceived;

ceived to give them a gloomy kind of satisfaction to have *brethren in iniquity* for their companions in their sufferings. But this idea of never ending punishment, respecting any order of beings, as well as men; has, I apprehend, been shewn to be unreasonable and absurd.

The language of the scriptures is often highly figurative, which may account for the unknown *principle*, or *source of evil*, being personified in them, so as to be called *Satan* in Hebrew, and *Devil*, *δαιμόνιον*, in Greek; but whatever is actually ascribed to this being, will appear, if we consider the circumstances of the several narrations, to be derived from nothing but the irregular passions of men, which are, of themselves, a cause abundantly adequate to the effect.

Indeed, the manner in which the sacred writers speak of the vices of those men, who are said to have been actuated by this evil principle, plainly enough intimates, that they did not, in reality, consider their guilt as shared with them by any other being who prompted and seduced them. Nay, the very contrary doctrine is strongly asserted by the apostle James, who says, ch. i. 14. "Then is a man tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed."

When

When our Lord said to Peter, on his suggesting that his sufferings were unworthy of him, Mat. xvi. 23. "Get thee behind me, Satan," the very indignation with which he spake, shows that he conceived the suggestion to have arisen only from Peter himself, who, in this case, was his satan, or adversary, as opposing the great purposes which were to be answered by his death. And surely the strong affection which Peter appears to have had for Jesus, joined with the narrowness of his views, may easily be supposed to account for his language. In like manner all that may really be meant by Jesus being *tempted by the devil*, Matt. iv, may be that the improper thoughts mentioned in the course of the narrative, either occurred to himself in his private meditations, or were suggested by some other person.

When satan is said to have stirred up David to number the people of Israel, 1 Chr. xxvi. 1, the thought may, in fact, have arisen from his own pride only, which, being evil, is, therefore, ascribed to satan; and it is remarkable, that the very same scheme is by another historian, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, ascribed to God, because the purposes of his providence were finally answered by it.

So.

So also *the evil spirit from the Lord*, which is said to have troubled Saul, 1 Sam. xvi. 14, was probably nothing but his own melancholy, or ill humour, which was relieved by music.

All that may be meant by the “fire of hell being prepared for the devil and his angels,” Mat. xxv. 41, may be that this punishment was originally appointed for the destruction of all evil, and the instruments of evil; nor can this language, with this construction, be said to be more figurative than that of John, who says, that “death and hell were cast into the lake of fire,” Rev. xx. 14.

As to the *demoniacs* mentioned in the New Testament, it is pretty evident that their disorder was some species of madness, or lunacy, which, in the time of our Saviour, was usually ascribed, by Heathens as well as Jews, to the malignant influence not of the *devil*, but of *demons*, or the souls of evil disposed persons, which were imagined to range about the earth, and to delight in mischief; an absurd and unphilosophical notion, but which it was not our Saviour’s business to correct.

The only story of this kind which is not pretty easy to be explained by this hypothesis

thesis is that in which *a legion of demons* is said to have gone out of two men into a herd of swine, Mat. viii. 28, Mark v. 1, Luke viii. 26. But if the swine only happened to be drowned about the same time that the two men were cured, it might have been sufficient to give rise to the story; which, it is to be observed, is not related by any person who was present at the transaction; Matthew not being called to follow Christ till after his return from this excursion beyond the sea of Gallilee; so that there was sufficient room for exaggeration and mistake.

Much mistake, with respect to this subject, seems to have been occasioned by the ambiguity in the meaning of the words *satan*, *angel**, and *devil*, which signify respectively, *adversary*, *messenger*, and *accuser*. Thus the *angels that sinned*, 2 Peter ii. 4, and Jude 6, were probably the messengers who were sent from the wilderness to spy out the land of Canaan, as, I think, has been sufficiently

* It is not unusual with the sacred writers to call even the unconscious instruments of God's pleasure, such as natural causes, &c. *angels*. Ps. civ. 4, "Who maketh the wind his angels, and flaming fire ministers." For so it may with most propriety be rendered.

proved

proved by the ingenious author of *the scripture meaning of the word satan*. Indeed the common interpretation of these passages is not agreeable to the constant tenor of the scriptures, in which no more than *one devil*, or *satan*, is ever mentioned.

When *the devil* is said “to go about like
“a roaring lion, seeking whom he may de-
“vour,” 1 Pet. v. 8, the best interpreters
suppose that Nero, or some other known
adversary, or accuser is intended. Also
when St. Paul says that “he desired to do”
a certain thing “again and again, but that
“satan hindered him,” 1 Theff. ii. 10,
he might mean any human adversary, or
some of his friends, influenced by worldly
considerations.

These are only a few general hints upon
the subject, nor do I know that any of them
are peculiar to myself; but they appear to
me to throw considerable light upon the
subject, and to remove some difficulties
from the scheme of revelation, which, I
hope, will recommend them to others as
well as to myself.

SECTION II.

Of abstinence from blood.

THE question concerning the lawfulness of eating blood ought to have been considered under the head of precepts that are not of a moral nature ; but as it is a subject of much less importance than the rest, and of a more doubtful nature, I have thought proper to reserve the discussion of it to this Appendix, in which I shall endeavour to do justice to the arguments on both sides.

The prohibition to eat blood, given to Noah, seems to be obligatory on all his posterity ; and as it accompanied the first express grant of animal food, it seems to be reserved, by way of acknowledgment to God, as the giver of life, and of the food which supports it. Also this respect paid to blood, which is shed when animals are killed for food, and which is the most apparent *vehicle of life*, may be intended to inculcate

inculcate a respect for *life*, as the most valuable gift of God, and to warn us not to deprive any animal of it, and much less man, without necessity.

It is observable that the awful denunciation of the judgment of God against murder, immediately follows the prohibition to eat blood, as if it had been understood that they had some connection. Gen. ix. 3,
 “ Every moving thing that liveth shall be
 “ meat for you, even as the green herb
 “ have I given you all things; but flesh
 “ with the life thereof, which is the blood
 “ thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely
 “ your blood of your lives will I require.
 “ At the hand of every beast will I require
 “ it, and at the hand of man. At the hand
 “ of every man’s brother will I require the
 “ life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s
 “ blood, by man shall his blood be shed;
 “ for in the image of God made he man.”

It may likewise be added, as an additional argument for abstaining from blood, that it is far from being a wholesome aliment, especially in hot countries, promoting leprous and scorbutic disorders*.

* What Dr. Lardner says upon this subject is pretty remarkable. “ Blood appears to me to be
 “ very unwholesome. Indeed I esteem it filthy, and
 “ highly disagreeable. So that I cannot bear the
 “ thought

Some have argued that the precept given to Noah was only intended to prohibit the eating of the flesh of animals raw, or cut off without killing the animal ; but the ancient Jews understood it differently ; and when Moses repeats the injunction to the Jews in particular (where it cannot but be acknowledged that he intended to express a prohibition of the use of blood itself) he gives precisely the same reason for it as in this case. Lev. xvii. 10, "Ye shall eat
" the blood of no manner of flesh, for the
" life of all flesh is the blood thereof." It is most probable, therefore, that the two commands differ only in terms, and that they have both the very same meaning.

It might have been imagined that, by christianity, the Gentiles, at least, had been exempted from the observance of this precept ; but among other things, which were before held innocent or indifferent by them, but which were proper to be observed after their conversion to christianity, the apostles expressly included this, when they were so-

" thought of eating it. If it ever comes to me in
" food, it is more than I know. And I suppose it
" is never brought, either alone, or mixed' with
" other things, to the tables of polite people." Remarks on Ward's Dissertation, p. 132.

lemnly assembled in council, in order to write to the disciples at Antioch, who had applied to them about their obligation to observe the laws of Moses. And though it is not expressly said that they were particularly directed by God to decide in this manner, yet it seems to be implied, when they say that *it seemed good to the Holy Ghost*, as well as to themselves, Acts xv. 28, “ It
 “ seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to
 “ us, to lay upon you no greater burden
 “ than these necessary things; that ye ab-
 “ stain from meats offered to idols, and
 “ from blood, and from things strangled,
 “ and from fornication; from which if you
 “ keep yourselves, ye shall do well.”

It is said by some, and especially Dr. Lardner, that this was only a temporary provision, designed to prevent giving offence to the Jews; but, in answer to this, it may be said, that there is no intimation, or hint, of its being temporary, or any mention made of a time when the prohibition was to cease; and the apostle John wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, when it cannot be pretended that there was any necessity for observing so much tenderness with respect to the Jews.

Moreover, it is not impossible but that
 our

our Lord himself might refer to this decree of the apostles, and thereby give his sanction to it, when, in his message to the church of Thyatira, he says, Rev. ii. 24, "I will put upon you none other burden, but that which you have already hold fast till I come." No moral precept is ever properly called a burden in the scriptures, and therefore they are probably some observances of a ceremonial nature that are referred to; and the very same word, *βαρὺς*, *burden*, is made use of both by the apostles, and by our Lord on this occasion*.

It may seem extraordinary, that the prohibition of *fornication* should be joined to that of eating blood, in the same decree;

* It appears to me rather extraordinary, that Dr. Lardner should be of opinion that our Lord refers to this apostolical decree in the Revelation, which he supposes to have been written in the year 95 or 96; a long time after the destruction of Jerusalem, and yet that it should have been intended to continue in force only till his religion had made greater progress in the world; as if that was the meaning of his coming: whereas I do not think that any thing else in the language of the New Testament would lead us to conclude that this phrase was applicable to any other than some determinate event, and especially the destruction of Jerusalem, in the time of the final judgment. See Remarks on Ward's Dissertations, p. 122.

but it should be considered that fornication was not thought to be an immorality by the Gentiles; and even the Jews had not the same ideas of chastity and purity, in this respect, which are enjoined upon christians. Dr. Lardner supposes that, by fornication in the apostolical decree we are to understand marriage with heathens, from which the apostle Paul so earnestly dissuades the christians at Corinth.

Dr. Lardner also supposes that, “the decree is not to be understood as a precept or commandment, but as delivering advice and counsel, concerning matters of prudence and expedience, considering the circumstances of things and persons in that time.”

Remarks on Ward's Dissertations, page 141. But it cannot be denied that it becomes all christians to yield to such advice and counsel, if it extend to them. And if, as he allows, it did extend to christians after the destruction of Jerusalem, I do not see that there is not equal reason why it should extend to us. And *one* of the reasons for abstaining from blood, which was hinted at when the prohibition was given to Noah, is of as much weight now as ever it was.

It has been urged as an argument against the perpetuity of the apostolical decree in the Acts,

Acts, that the apostle Paul never quotes, or alludes to it in his writings. But admitting it to be temporary, no person will maintain that it was not designed to extend beyond the time of his epistles; and yet, though the unlawfulness of *fornication* be allowed to be perpetual, Paul did not avail himself of any argument drawn from that decree when he wrote on that subject to the Corinthians, who, of all the Greeks, were most remarkably addicted to that vice.

If we interpret this prohibition of the apostles by the practice of the primitive christians, who can hardly be supposed not to have rightly understood the nature and extent of it, we cannot but conclude, that it was intended to be absolute and perpetual; for blood was not eaten by any christians for many centuries. When the christians were charged with meeting in the night, and drinking blood, by way of binding one another to secrecy, in some immoral practices, Tertullian observes with respect to it, that it was well known that no christian would eat blood at all; insomuch that it was usual with heathens, when they wanted to know whether any person was a christian, to set blood-puddings before him as a very sufficient test.

Blood is not eaten by christians in any part of the East, or by the Greeks, or Russians, who are of the Greek church, to this day; nor indeed was the use of blood introduced into this western part of the world till very late. When the Pomeranians were converted to christianity, which was in 1120, they were particularly enjoined to abstain from blood, as a badge of their profession. It was not allowed to be eaten in the West in the time of Bede, or a century afterwards; and blood was not eaten in any part of Switzerland till Calvin introduced the practice from some other place. See Curcellæus on this subject. Dr. Lardner, however, says, that little regard was paid to these regulations of the apostolical decree by the Latin christians, from the end of the fourth century. Remarks on Ward's Dissertations, p. 136.

It is farther said, that the *liberal spirit* of christians is strongly against any such a distinction of meats as the prohibition of the use of blood supposes; and that even the very *letter* of the declaration of our Lord and his apostles exclude any such distinction. Thus we read, Mat. xv. 11, "Not that
 " which goeth into the mouth defileth a
 " man, but that which cometh out of the
 " mouth,

“mouth, that defileth a man.” And the apostle Paul represents him who *believeth that he may eat all things*, as not weak, but as of a stronger and more enlarged mind than he who thought and acted differently, Rom. xiv. 1. He also says, v. 17, “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ;” and v. 20, “All things are pure, but it is evil for any man who eateth with offence.”

But our Saviour made the declaration above mentioned at a time when he himself strictly conformed even to the Jewish distinction of meats; and Paul might only allude to the same restrictions, to which, as well as to other Jewish rites, many christians then conformed. The same apostle, in the same general manner, makes light of all distinction of *days*, though he, no doubt, made a distinction of one day of rest.

Though, in discussing this subject, I have generally mentioned the arguments *for* the prohibition of blood before those *against* it, and have replied to the latter more than to the former, I would not have my reader conclude that I am fully determined in my judgment with respect to it.

Let

Let him weigh what has been advanced on both sides, and decide for himself; not forgetting that this question relates to the least of all positive precepts, and that all positive or ceremonial precepts are of little importance compared to the smallest moral duty.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 12, l. 24, *for here read hear.* P. 30, l. 23, *for Sam. r. chapter.* P. 42, l. 23, *for the, r. all the.* P. 66, l. 22, *for keep not, r. not keep.* P. 75, l. 3, *for all, r. all the.* P. 80, l. 8, *for characteric, r. characteristic.* P. 84, l. 22, *for 1 James ii. 12. r. James i. 2, 12.* P. 94, l. 27, *for aught, r. ought.* P. 105, l. 16, *for good r. gold.* P. 108, l. 11, *for arise, r. awake.* P. 110, l. 10, *for how both, r. both how.* P. 114, l. 9, *for visions, r. vicious.* P. 122, l. 9, *for the, r. in the.* P. 132, l. 14, *for the, r. for the.* P. 134, l. 1, *for the, r. thy.* Ibid. l. 24, *for and that, r. and.* P. 138, l. 3, *for a frequent opportunity, r. frequent opportunities.* P. 140, l. 28, *for first thought, r. thought.* P. 166, l. 21, *for instructions, r. instruction.* P. 173, l. 18, *for shall, r. shall not.* P. 191, l. 6, *for that, r. then.* P. 195, l. 10, *for of, r. on.* P. 198, l. 3, *for and, r. or.* P. 222, l. 9, *for susem, r. system.* P. 137, l. 5, *in the note, for ministers, r. his ministers.*

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